Order From Disorder

Proclus' Doctrine of Evil and its Roots in Ancient Platonism

JOHN PHILLIPS

STUDIES IN PLATONISM, NEOPLATONISM, AND THE PLATONIC TRADITION

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Order From Disorder

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Proclus' Doctrine of Evil and its Roots in Ancient Platonism

By
John Phillips

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This book is dedicated, with love and affection,
to June and Betsy, wife and mother,
to my children and daughter-in-law,
Regan, Ryan, and Melissa
and to my wonderful grandchildren,
Jared Blake and Lauren Blair

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PREFACE

This book is the fruition of two notions, first that a truly thorough study of Proclus' doctrine of evil must go beyond examination of the Neoplatonist's late *opusculum* on the topic to include numerous relevant texts from his earlier treatises, and secondly that his doctrine gives us a good vantage point from which to assess the entire tradition of treatment of the questions of the origin of evil and of its mode of existence within ancient Platonism, a tradition of which Proclus' own treatment in many ways represents the final chapter. Earlier versions of chapters or portions of chapters were presented orally on various occasions, most notably before audiences at meetings of the International Society of Neoplatonic Studies and the University of Texas Workshop in Ancient Philosophy (convened at Emory University by Steve Strange), and at a conference on Plato's Ancient Readers in Australia arranged by Harold Tarrant and Dirk Baltzly. I am greatly indebted to those who offered comments at these gatherings. I am especially grateful to John Dillon and to Oxford University Press for their kind permission for use of translations from his volume on Alcinous. All other translations are my own. My thanks go as well to Robert Berchman and John Finamore, editors of the Brill series of which this volume is part, and to Kim Fiona Plas, Birgitta Poelmans, and Brill Academic Publishers for their considerable help. Finally, I should acknowledge the University of Chattanooga Foundation for its support of my research through various grants.

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(a) Chapter 4: Irrational Nature, as "Theories of Nature in Platonism" in J. Finamore and R. Berchman, eds., (2005), *Plato Redivivus: Studies in the History of Platonism* (New Orleans)

(b) Chapter 6: Evil as Weakness of the Soul, as "Platonists on the Origin of Evil" in H. Tarrant and D. Baltzly, eds., (2006), *Reading Plato in Antiquity* (London)

INTRODUCTION

Our understanding of Proclus' doctrine of the nature of evil has been greatly enhanced in the past thirty years by several annotated translations of his late monograph on the subject, *De malorum subsistentia* (= *DMS*), most recently the fine English edition of Jan Opsomer and Carlos Steel. Steering us through the often tortuous maze of Moerbeke's Latin translation and providing exact and enlightening overviews of the theory contained in the text, they have collectively brought a long neglected aspect of Proclus' thought into much sharper focus. We now have a better idea of the nature and scope of Proclus' opposition to Plotinus' theory of evil, beyond his blanket rejection of his predecessor's claim that matter is absolute evil. We also have a somewhat stronger grasp of the manifold connections between his monograph on evil and the various discussions of the subject in his earlier works.[1] What we still lack, however, is a firm understanding of the extent to which Proclus' theory is shaped by his reading of Plato's dialogues.[2] We may be able to indicate to which particular passages from the dialogues Proclus is referring or alluding in his discussions of evil, but there has as yet been no attempt at an in-depth analysis of how or why such passages were important to Proclus as well as to his Platonic predecessors, or of the place of Proclus' treatment of Plato in the history of Platonic exegesis of the dialogues.[3] We must remember that the theories of evil that

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[1] On the dating of *DMS*, see Beierwaltes (1962), 65; Isaac (1977–1982), 19; Opsomer and Steel (1999), 3 f.

[2] We do know more about how certain dialogues were understood by the earlier exegetes of Plato. See, for example, H. Tarrant (2000) and G. Reydams-Schils (1999).

[3] On the question of whether or not Proclus made greater use of Plato's texts than Plotinus, see Hager (1962), 102, who disagrees with Schröder, and Waszink (1979), 42. We should expect that the methodologies of those Platonists who wrote commentaries on the dialogues would differ from those of Platonists who did not. On this see Baltes (1975), 269 f. on Numenius; see also Saffrey and Westerink (1968), lvi and lxxi. Proclus expounds on his methodology at *Th. Pl.* I 4–7. Particularly interesting is chapter 6, where he briefly calls into question its appropriateness. On the exegetical styles of Porphyry, Iamblichus, and Proclus, and the ultimate triumph of Iamblichus' methods later, cf. Wallis (1995), 135 f.

emerge from the various Platonic interpretations of Plato were without exception thought to be Plato's own, despite the fact that, at least according to most modern evaluations, Plato has no theory of evil as such.[4] Indeed, there is still no consensus among commentators as to what for Plato counted as the principle of evil.[5] Although this and other questions were sources of often vehement contention in ancient Platonism and there was common agreement that Plato was not always clear on the matter, Platonists harbored no doubt that embedded in Plato's texts was a fully developed doctrine of evil which an enlightened analysis could uncover. Only by close investigation into these analyses by Proclus and those who preceded him can we truly appreciate the depth of scrutiny to which Plato's texts were subjected.

The soundness of this approach to the study of Proclus' doctrine of evil is confirmed by the fact that in their efforts to plumb the essence of Plato's concept of evil contemporary scholars still turn to many of the same passages that formed the 'canon' for the exegeses of ancient Platonism. And, as with Proclus and his predecessors, the only real consensus in the recent debate is that it is here, if anywhere, that we are to find Plato's idea of the origin of evil; beyond this, disagreement, typically over the very same issues, continues undiminished.[6] In a series of articles[7] published less than a quarter century ago, R.D. Mohr entered what was by that time an already long-standing twentieth century debate over Plato's 'doctrine' of the origin of evil. This debate for the most part was limited to assessments of Plato's notion of the pre-

[4] Cf. Hager (1962), 73ff. For very different readings of Plato's view of the origin of evil and soul's role in it, particularly as this is laid out in those parts of the myths of *Timaeus* and *Statesman* which have to do with the pre-cosmic disorder, see Cherniss (1954), Herter (1957), and O'Brien (1999).

[5] Cf. Hager (1962), 73f. and (1963), 6ff.

[6] The most telling difference between ancient and contemporary exegeses is that the ancients found Plato's language in these texts at most enigmatic, but never inconsistent or self-contradictory and that they found in them a fully formulated theory of evil. Such is not the case with contemporary commentators.

[7] 1980[1], 1980[2], 1981, where he provides a complete list of those who have weighed in on the debate since Vlastos' article. Mohr's own position is that the disorderly motion has no psychic cause "whether rational or irrational, direct or indirect" ([1981], p. 199), but is a function of phenomena which are in and of themselves "a positive source of evil." We should also note that Brisson (1974)—according to whom there is no positive source of evil in Plato—considers this question, rejecting the Plutarchan hypothesis supported by Grube and Dodds that the cause of the disorderly motion is an evil World Soul (501ff.). He concludes that neither God nor the corporeal nature of *Timaeus* and the *Statesman* myth is the cause of this movement; rather, they only "orient" it, both qualitatively and quantitatively, in one direction or another (487).

cosmic disorderly motion found principally in *Timaeus* and the myth of *Statesman*, yet the arguments cover issues that are at the core of the entire history of interpretation of Platonic evil. Tracing the beginning of that most recent controversy to a paper published in 1939 by Vlastos and a subsequent rebuttal by Cherniss, Mohr documents the questions that were at the center of the long exchange of views that followed this initial conflict of arguments: whether or not the disorderly motion is truly independent of divine control; whether or not the Demiurge plays a role in the generation of evil; whether or not matter plays a role in the generation of evil; whether or not what Plato terms the "bodily nature"—whatever this is—contributes to the generation of evil; whether or not the chaotic motion has a psychic cause, in which case we would be forced to embrace Plutarch of Chaeronea's doctrine of an evil World Soul; whether or not there is a relationship between the disorderly motion and the shaking of the Receptacle in *Timaeus* 52dff.; whether or not the pre-cosmic chaos, and so evil, is removed from the ordered cosmos during creation; whether or not evil belongs to what exist as "wholes," or merely to the parts of wholes; and whether or not cosmic evil is necessary for the completeness of the universe. Insofar as the ancient debate over the origin of evil is in the most fundamental sense informed by exegeses of the same passages in Plato, we should not be surprised to find—as we shall find in what follows—that these same questions are at *its* center as well. To analyze the theories of evil in ancient Platonism, therefore, is primarily to analyze how ancient Platonists analyzed Plato.

Methodology

The most valuable contributions to the study of Proclus' doctrine of evil have come principally from two sources: comprehensive works on the history of the theoretical treatment of the nature of evil in antiquity, which usually include significant chapters on Proclus, such as those of Hager, and the introductions and notes of the modern translations of *DMS* undertaken by Erler (German), Isaac (French, with an edition of the Latin text), and Opsomer and Steel (English).[8] By their

[8] The best of the translations is the latest, that of Opsomer and Steel (1999[1]). It gives an excellent account of the doctrine in its introduction and extensive notes (particularly their interpretation of Proclus' treatment of matter and his critique of Plotinus' theory

very nature the former can offer us at most only synoptic evaluations of Proclus' doctrine, although such an approach has the virtues of clarifying the guiding principles of that doctrine and of helping to place Proclus properly within the philosophical (and theological) tradition. The latter, on the other hand, provide by far the most detailed analyses of the doctrine—but, for the most part, only as it is presented in the late treatise on evil, and even then in somewhat summary form.

The methodological principle guiding the present study is that anything approaching a full understanding of Proclus' doctrine of evil demands a thorough critique of how Proclus and other Platonists read the seminal passages in certain dialogues which they thought contained Plato's treatment of evil.[9] The chief problem with past attempts at uncovering his doctrine by relying almost exclusively on *DMS* is that this monograph is in many respects merely a synopsis of it. It is true that allusions to crucial passages in the dialogues are plentiful there; yet for the most part Proclus simply hints at the intricacies of exegetical insight that these passages had inspired in his own earlier work, as well as in that of other Platonists over the centuries. Thus Proclus formulated his doctrine of evil to a large degree from his reading of Plato. For that reason, it is often the case that the philosophical significance of statements made in *DMS*, where specific problems of exegesis are, of course, much less prominent, can be fully elicited only through reference to his earlier works, so that we should not look exclusively or even primarily to that treatise for full clarification of matters related to Proclus' doctrine. My intention in the present study is therefore not in the first place to present an analysis Proclus' doctrine of evil as such, but, rather, to investigate the extent to which the exegetical tradition of ancient Platonism provided the context for that doctrine. What I intend to do is to augment the sketches of concepts and themes contained in

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of evil), provides helpful summaries of each chapter, and attempts to improve on Moerbeke's Latin translation by returning to the manuscript tradition employed by him and, where possible, correcting it. The quality of the translation is greatly enhanced by their use of the *Thesauros linguae graecae* to establish cross-references to other treatises, thereby recovering some of the lost Greek (where the Greek of Isaak Sebastokrator's paraphrases is not available). Their appendix contains various conjectures on the need for changes to the text and its meaning which constitute an advancement upon the edition of Boese.

[9] On the importance of the memory and texts of Plato in the Academy of Proclus' time, see Saffrey and Westerink (1968), xv ff. And lvi f.

the late monograph on evil with an evaluation of passages from his earlier works where he often gives much fuller attention to individual issues.

One important fact that this methodology immediately uncovers is that there is no evidence in Proclus' philosophical writings of a development or maturation of his thinking on the subject of evil. It is beyond question that *DMS* is largely an restatement—and at times an elaboration—of ideas that Proclus developed earlier in his career in composing his commentaries on Plato's dialogues and his treatise on Plato's theology. Indeed, it bears repeating that Plato is at the core of the late work. At the outset of his investigation into the nature of evil there he states his intention to use Plato as a "light" that illuminates the various problems that have come up during the centuries of debate on the question of evil. Reverting to the dialogues is especially important when particularly thorny philosophical problems arise (c. 8). While Proclus is firmly within the Platonic tradition in regarding the dialogues as the canon by which all doctrines are to be evaluated, he is amply aware that simply quoting or paraphrasing Plato will not suffice as a substitute for cogent argumentation; yet, at the same time, he feels, rational demonstration alone carries little weight without the support provided by reflection upon the dialogues.[10] In his monograph Proclus endeavors to achieve a balance of the two modes of investigation, frequently measuring the strength both of his own arguments and of those of his predecessors and opponents against the truth of Plato's words. Here, as in his earlier discussions, he continually returns to a relatively small number of texts that for the Platonic tradition had long been *loci classici*. It is important to note that the long analysis of evil in his commentary on the *Timaeus*, his most extensive continuous treatment of the subject beside *DMS*, has as its *lemmata* two short but very significant texts, 29e–30a. But within the discourse he either refers directly or alludes to a number of other well-known passages that also figure prominently in *DMS*. Platonists believed these passages to be interrelated and, taken together, to contain the core of Plato's own doctrine of evil. Properly interpreted, Plato's texts reveal the origin and nature of evil, why it must exist in the world, and, at least in the case of the monistic tradition, its ultimate dependence

[10] Cf. especially cc. 1, 6, and 8. Of course, the dialogues were not the only sources of wisdom; we should also include the Orphic theologians and the Chaldaean Oracles, among other sources.

upon the Good. Since, then, to explain the nature of evil is first and foremost to explain its origin as a particular 'event' in the creation of the cosmos, it is an essential truth for Proclus as for the Platonists who preceded him that full and accurate exegeses of these texts are essential for understanding what evil is. And so it is essential for us, his modern interpreters, to endeavor to come to some comprehension of the ways in which this rather small but extremely important cluster of texts were read and used not only by Proclus, but also by earlier Platonists to whom he was either directly or indirectly responding. Indeed, Proclus is an excellent subject of study in this regard precisely because he comes comparatively late in the long history of exegesis of Plato in antiquity with which he was intimately familiar and which provided the framework for his own interpretation. In order to come to terms with Proclus' doctrine, we must as well be prepared to encounter the exegetical tradition that was his philosophical heritage.

I have chosen for investigation five topics that stand out as the subjects of the greatest controversy and most prolific discussion for Proclus individually and for the Platonic tradition in general. The order of my treatment of these topics follows Proclus' division of evils into those that pertain to the body and those that pertain to the soul, the latter category including the evil that may or may not belong to both soul at the cosmic level and to the human soul. In each case I attempt to explain the historical significance of the topic, how it was understood within the tradition, and, when the evidence permits, the possible motivation for the different interpretations of it. I have for the most part limited the scope of my inquiry to the treatments of those Platonists of the Middle Platonic and Neoplatonic periods whose doctrines not only were prominent in the tradition, but who also posed certain challenges for Proclus in the composition of his doctrine, and to whom he was, to a greater or lesser extent, reacting. The reader will therefore find relatively little regarding the views of Porphyry, Iamblichus, and Proclus' teacher, Syrianus, many elements of which we either know to be or may presume to be, again to a greater or lesser extent, embedded in the doctrine of Proclus.[11] Indeed, since

[11] For discussions of the treatments of evil in Porphyry and Iamblichus see Schröder (1916), 186ff. and Dörrie (1965), 175ff. On the influence of Iamblichus on Proclus' doctrine of evil and the possibility that, like Proclus, Iamblichus was largely responding to Plotinus, see Bechtle (1999).

there is no indication of development in Proclus' doctrine of evil in *DMS*, it is very likely that it is substantially the same as that taught to him by Syrianus and modelled on the thought of Porphyry and Iamblichus.[12]

We noted that there is no discernable development of Proclus' doctrine over the course of his philosophical career. We do not, then, find in *DMS* anything of a strictly philosophical nature that is new; all of the topics covered in this treatise Proclus treated—often much more substantially—in earlier works, and his approach to them remains unaltered in all periods of his writing. Particularly striking are the parallels between the late treatise and the protracted discussion of evil in his *Timaeus* commentary, the most detailed singular treatment of evil in his corpus outside of *DMS*.[13] Appendix I shows that virtually all of the important themes of the latter treatise appear as well in the extended commentary on *Timaeus* 29e–30a. In addition to sometimes extended analyses in the extant commentaries and in *Platonic Theology*, the scholion to *In Rempublicam* I 37,23 (II 371,10–18 Kroll) mentions three other lost works in which Proclus deals with the problem of evil: a treatise on the speech of Diotima from Plato's *Symposium*, the commentary on *Theaetetus* (in which Proclus no doubt considered not only Socrates' statement in 176a that evil cannot be destroyed, as the scholiast notes, but also the notions that the visible gods are free of evil and that evil is the "sub-contrary" to the Good), and what may have been a polemical treatment of Plotinus' treatise on evil (*Enneads* I.8).[14] Proclus' purpose in composing a separate work on evil so late in his career may have been primarily to assemble all of the various arguments on the subject that he had presented in more specialized contexts in his earlier writings—covering both his own views and his polemical analyses of his opponents—into a coherent monograph. Although certainly *DMS* is in one perspective a synopsis of views that are more thoroughly worked out elsewhere, it would be a mistake to look upon it as philosophically simplistic. Its style of composition does distinguish it from most of Proclus' other works, one of the most striking differences being his efforts there to compress what are often difficult and complex doctrinal con-

[12] Cf. Hager (1962), 93 f.

[13] On the relationship between these two treatments of evil, cf. Theiler (1966), 165 f.

[14] On the various references to and excerpts from a commentary on the *Enneads* by Proclus, see Westerink (1959); Opsomer and Steel (1999[1]), 47, n. 8; Blumenthal (2000), 169 f. Opsomer and Steel (1999[1]) date the *DMS* after this commentary (4).

cepts into more 'manageable' form. But this compressed style masks a philosophical sophistication and subtlety that only a careful reading of the text allows one to appreciate (as Appendix II demonstrates).[15]

Before entering into this analysis, it will be helpful, first, to summarize the passages from Plato's dialogues that play the most important roles in the formulations of the various doctrines of evil within the Platonic tradition, and then to outline the positions of the Stoics and the Peripatetics, the two most prominent groups who contested the fundamental Platonist tenets regarding the existence of evil that arose out their exegeses of these texts. As commonplace as it was for ancient commentators to cite or allude to such texts individually in their treatments of evil, none provides a truly systematic analysis of their interrelationship, despite the fact that they clearly believed that recognition of such connections was necessary in order to grasp all aspects of Plato's doctrine. It is left for us to piece together these connections from the available evidence. In what follows I offer an overview of the significance of these texts in the history of the treatment of evil in Platonism and of the points of contact among them that were generally accepted within the tradition. This will provide a basis for discussion in subsequent chapters of the ways in which various Platonists highlighted or obfuscated these acknowledged interrelationships to suit their own purposes.

Platonists believed that the following texts formed a single account of the nature of evil that is more or less clear, but is nonetheless always coherent and consistent. Taken together, they show Plato's concern to account for the two main forms of evil, that of the body and that of the soul, most significantly by way of myths of creation in *Timaeus* and *Statesman* that are to be seen to have conceptual but not temporal significance.[16] Platonic orthodoxy, formed in accordance with Timaeus' statement that his myth is no more than a "probable" account, required that most Platonists not subject these myths to literal interpretation. Principally what this meant for Platonists was that they were to regard nothing of what Plato recounts in his myths as taking place in time.

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[15] If Proclus' intended audience was, indeed, as Opsomer and Steel (1999[1]) suggest (1), a more general public outside the limited confines of his school, then he must have presumed that they were well educated in the more subtle themes of pagan Greek philosophy. Isaac (1977–1982), 11 and 18, sees the monograph as a "propaedeutic lecture" designed to prepare future teachers of philosophy.

[16] On the Neoplatonists' attitude toward Plato's myths, see Dillon (1995), 364.

The temporality of his language is solely "for the sake of instruction" (*didaskalias kharin*) or "for the sake of clarity" (*saphêneias kharin*).[17] Such instruction or clarification comes to the reader through the manner in which the myths reveal the very real and seminal conceptual distinctions between certain periods or phases of cosmic creation. Of particular importance for the question of the nature of evil are references to an intermediate phase of generation between pure potentiality when there 'existed' only matter conceived in and of itself, and the generation of the physical world 'out of' primary matter through the providential harmonization of Reason and Necessity. What Plato seeks to convey by these myths is a distinction between two stages of cosmic creation, a 'pre-cosmic' period that "precedes" the providential activity of the Demiurge and is marked by irrationality and chaos, and the actual generation of the cosmos, which most Platonists construed as the imposition of order on a pre-existing state of disorder.[18]

There is another point to keep in mind as we proceed. Our analysis of Proclus' doctrine in light both of his interpretation of Plato and of the historical context of that interpretation will quite naturally reveal the prominence throughout the exegetical tradition not only of particular texts within Plato's dialogues, but also of certain constructs within those texts. Often the importance of these constructs for the tradition is, from our viewpoint, completely disproportionate to what their importance must have been to Plato himself. But it must be noted that ancient commentators did possess something like our modern (or post-modern) sensitivity to the danger of reading into Plato's works ideas and theories that he did not, in fact, advance. The standards employed to avoid this pitfall, however, were not at all like those that we would utilize today. Hence, what we feel to be misinterpretation or even perversion of Plato's thought was accepted by ancient Platonists as accurate and conservative analysis of his sometimes obscure or enigmatic language—unless, of course, such analysis came from rival exegetes or schools of

[17] On the various uses of this methodology in the exegetical tradition, see Baltes (1976), *passim*.

[18] It may seem odd that there are no specific references in the exegetical tradition to *Sophist* 265c, where the Athenian Stranger asks whether we should hold that all things come into existence through intelligent design or through "nature" acting as a completely spontaneous (*automatês*) cause. The latter hypothesis, portrayed here as the doctrine of "the many," is a rather transparent allusion to Plato's own philosophical tradition. There is a clear connection between this passage and both *Timaeus* and the *Statesman* myth.

philosophy. Such readings were, as they always are, determined largely by hidden agendas of the followers of the various schools.

> 1) *Timaeus* 29a–d: All existing things necessarily have a cause. The Demiurge, as architect of all becoming, in his fashioning of the cosmos employed a Model (*paradeigmos*) on which he continually fixed his gaze. This Model is necessarily rational, unchanging and eternal, for the cosmos is the most beautiful of all things that have come to be and the Demiurge is the "best of all causes."
>
> 2) *Timaeus* 29d–30a: The Demiurge, being good, desired that all that he was to create be like him to the highest degree possible. He thus wanted all things to be good and nothing evil. Encountering "all that is visible" and finding it to be not at rest, but in a "discordant and disorderly motion," he led it into "order out of disorder," since he judged that this state was better than what he had found.

Both of these passages are key to establishing the basic Platonic position that God is not responsible for evil, since he can create only what is good. Proclus, and certainly others before him, found here justification for the stronger claim that God wills the non-existence of evil. The reference in 30a to the "visible" that is moving irrationally, in conjunction with the account in 52d–53c of the Receptacle blending with the forms of the elements, is frequently cited throughout the Platonic tradition as proof that Plato recognized a pre-cosmic state of disorder that is the origin of evil and that upon this disorder the Demiurge imposed order and rationality.

> 3) *Timaeus* 42d–e: Having assigned each of the newly-created souls to a star and divulging to them the laws of Fate by which the visible universe is to be governed, thus relieving himself of blame for any of the wickedness that they might commit, the Demiurge sowed the souls into the various levels of the cosmos. To the "young gods" he gave the task of forming mortal bodies, and of constructing and controlling all that remains to add to the soul. They are to lead these living beings to the best possible life, but their influence over them ends at the point when they engage in self-willed sinfulness.

This passage is further corroboration that God bears no culpability for the existence of evil. Moreover, it is one among a number of texts in which Plato makes it clear that the soul is, indeed, responsible for its own sinfulness. The degree of its responsibility, however, is a matter of much debate.

> 4) *Timaeus* 52d–53c: The account of creation having passed to a description according to Necessity, a third Kind is added to being and becoming, the "Receptacle of all becoming," referred to also as "Nurse" (*tithênê*)

> and "Place" (*khora*) of all things. The Receptacle receives the forms of the four elements which are moving in a random and haphazard way, and is thereby "shaken" (*seiesthai*) by their motion; but, in turn, she produces a disturbance in them that forces those that are dissimilar away from each other and those that are alike toward each other. This was the state of things before the imposition of rational order, when the mixture of the Receptacle and the forms of the elements, which are also said to be mere "potencies" (*dunameis*) and "traces" (*ikhnê*) of the true elements, produced something irrational, unmeasured, and lacking the direction of God.

This is one of the most difficult and intensely debated passages in the exegetical tradition, and for good reason. In the eyes of Platonists all of the passages from *Timaeus* summarized above guarantee not only that the creating God plays no part in the generation of evil, but also that he positively wills its non-existence. There is no principle of evil, if by that we mean an independent cause of evil in the world. The origin of evil rests in a pre-cosmic state of disorder or chaos that is really nothing more than a lack or privation of the rational ordering power that comes from divine Providence. That it is irrational and "without God" demonstrates that the pre-cosmic evil is not something that actively opposes divine Providence, but is merely a lack or deficiency of order and reason. Creation, then, is strictly speaking only the introduction of order on a pre-existing disorder. One of the challenges that Platonists faced in their interpretations of this passage and others was to explain the source of these forms of the elements. They cannot have come directly from God, because God at this point is absent from the process. Yet, even as mere traces, they are still forms and must derive from some divine principle that is other than the Demiurge directly. But if all things divine that are causally active are like the Demiurge, and if there is a single process of creation, then it would seem to follow that what they produce would, like all that the Demiurge creates, necessarily be good, i.e. possess rationality and order to the highest possible degree. For some exegetes, the answer lay to certain extent in Plato's use of the word "potencies." That is, the trace-forms are at this point only potentially forms. Nonetheless such potencies must come from somewhere other than matter itself, since matter, which is utter deficiency and completely without qualification, is potentiality in a much different sense. Related to this problem is another: What exactly is it that is produced from the mixture of Receptacle and the trace-forms? Ancient commentators often pointed to 30a, where what is in disorderly motion is called the "visible." So, the disorderly motion must belong to some-

thing corporeal, because only what is corporeal can be seen. But is it a natural body or something more primitive? Thus Platonists draw a distinction between what is fully a body and the "nature of body" or body-in-itself which possesses some form and is in motion, but is, in the view of some, for all intents and purposes devoid of soul. Yet, if this "nature of body" is in motion, where does its motion come from, if not soul?

> 5) *Timaeus* 69b–e: The Demiurge imparts reason and harmony onto this state of disorder and so generates the cosmos. He himself is creator of what is divine; the creation of mortal things he leaves to his offspring. In imitation of him, they surround the body with the "immortal principle of soul," thus bestowing on each being a body as a vehicle as well as "another form of soul, the mortal," which is the seat of the passions and "irrational perception." The young gods give to this mortal form of soul its own place within the living creature in order to keep the "divine" form of soul separate and uncontaminated.

What Plato says here helps Platonists to separate further the divine soul from participation in the generation of corporeal evil. If any part of soul is to be implicated, it is the irrational soul of mortals, although even that assertion is too much for many Platonists, especially those who advocate a theory of the unity of soul. Yet if the pre-cosmic disorder is a motion, and, as Plato maintains in *Phaedrus*, the cause of all motion is soul, then it is difficult to argue that soul is not responsible. As we shall see, for many Platonists the way out of this problem is through the concept of the causal activity of an irrational nature that stands between the irrational soul and the body.

> 6) *Statesman* 272b–273e: In the myth explaining the reversal of revolutions of the heavens, the Eleatic Stranger depicts a time when the "helmsman of the universe" withdrew from his position of control, as did, in response, all of the gods who shared in the cosmic rule. At this point, as Fate and "innate desire" (*sumphutos epithumia*) took over control, the cosmic revolutions reversed course. The universe at first followed its customarily orderly course, but gradually confusion and tumult reigned. The cause of this was the corporeal nature (*to sômatoeides*) in the mixture, which was part of the "ancient nature" and shared in the "great disorder" (*pollês ataxias*) that preceded the generation of the present cosmos. The Creator, seeing the continuing devolution of the cosmos into disorder and chaos, stepped in again to reestablish harmony, in the process making the world immortal and ageless. As a result all that is good in our universe comes from the Creator; all that is "harsh and unjust" stems from this "former condition" (*tês emprosthen hexeôs*) which survives as an operant principle in the created world.

This myth becomes a kind of overlay for the *Timaeus* myth, with particular aspects of the former being identified with features of the latter.[19] The "innate desire" and the "ancient nature" described in *Statesman*, which is a synonym for Fate, is later associated with the concept of nature (*phusis*), or the motive cause of the disorderly motion. Nature produces this motion by introducing into matter the trace-forms (from *Timaeus* 52d–53c) that "shake" it. The product is what Plato terms in *Statesman* the "corporeal nature" (Proclus sometimes calls it "the nature of body") which is the subject of pre-cosmic corporeal evil upon which the Demiurge imposes order. As we have noted, this is the term Proclus often employs to refer to the body-in-itself that is distinguished conceptually from the fully formed body that results from demiurgic creation. The "innate desire" is taken as a reference to the cause of the pre-cosmic disorderly motion and is thus identified with the irrational nature that brings the trace-forms together with matter.[20] Still, as the *Statesman* myth makes clear, there is a residuum of evil in the created cosmos (a point that connects this myth with Plato's assertion of the necessity of evil at *Theaetetus* 176a);[21] but for this the Demiurge bears no responsibility, since its cause is different. The clear parallels between the depictions here of the pre-cosmic chaos, the Demiurge's commitment to the generation of what is exclusively good, and the process of creation as the imposition of order upon disorder with familiar passages in *Timaeus* led ancient commentators to regard the *Statesman* myth as in large part a summary re-statement of the creation myth of *Timaeus*.

> 7) *Laws* 896a–898c: In the long discussion about the soul, the Athenian Stranger and Clinias agree that soul can be defined as the substance that possesses self-motion. It is older than body and superior to it in being.

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[19] Cf. Dillon's (1995), 365, comment: "What particularly interests me…is the degree to which one discerns in Proclus' treatment of the myth a recognition that the literal interpretation of the *Statesman* myth stands or falls with that of the mythical framework of the *Timaeus*." Brisson (1974) notes the connection between the two cosmic movements described in this myth and the cooperation of reason and Necessity depicted in *Timaeus*, the difference being that in the former we find the universe moving from order to disorder, while in the latter it is from disorder to order (487f.). He asserts as well that the "corporeal nature" is equivalent to the errant cause of *Timaeus*. Cf. also Schicker (1995), 386f.

[20] On the proper translation of this term, see Brisson (1974), 484, n. 9.

[21] This is a point made by most Platonists. See, for example, Plutarch of Chaeronea, *De Is. et Os.* 371A and cf. Thévenaz (1938), 120, Brisson (1974), 490, and Opsomer and Steel (1999^2), 236.

> Soul is thus the cause of all things, both good and evil. In the upper world there are two World Souls, one good and the other evil, and the actions of each oppose those of the other. The motions of the good World Soul, by which it governs the cosmos, are rational; those of the evil World Soul are disorderly and irrational. Of these two Souls, it is the good one that drives the revolutions of the heavens and so governs the universe.

This passage is exploited by dualistic Platonists to demonstrate that, according to Plato, the cause of the disorderly motion was, indeed, a soul which is, in addition, the primordial principle of evil (or an element in that principle, as in Numenius) to be distinguished from the good World Soul. In the doctrines of Plutarch of Chaeronea and Atticus, the evil World Soul completely submits to the providential control of the good World Soul; according to others (principally Numenius), it remains recalcitrant and defiant. The concept of the continuing opposition of an evil World Soul is played out in Numenian psychology, where the human soul is seen as divided into two separate and antagonistic souls, one rational and the other irrational.

> 8) *Theaetetus* 176a: After Theodorus tells Socrates that, if he could persuade others of the truth of what he has said, there would be greater peace and fewer evils among men, Socrates rejoins that evils can never be eradicated from the world. There is necessarily always a contrary (*hupenantion*) to the Good. Evil is not present among the gods, but belongs to the "mortal nature" (*thnêtên phusin*) and this world. We should therefore escape from this world as soon as we are able.

There was disagreement among Platonists over the interpretation of Plato's *hupenantion* and more generally over the sense in which we are to understand the nature of the contrary (or sub-contrary) of the Good. For Plotinus, the very fact that matter/evil is ever present in the world means that there can be no particular place to which the disembodied soul can flee; escape must rather take place from within. For Proclus, Plato's juxtaposition of the two assertions (1) that evil exists necessarily and (2) that the gods are not responsible for it is not coincidental and points to their compatibility. For both the perfection of the world as well as the possibility of generation logically require the existence of evil. This passage is also interpreted in light of the *Statesman* myth, which shows that evil survives the imposition of order upon the pre-cosmic disorder. The "mortal nature" is here linked both with the "mortal form of soul" of *Timaeus* 69b–e and with the "ancient nature" of the *Statesman* myth.

9) *Republic* 617d–e: In this famous and much-discussed segment of the Myth of Er, the so-called Choice of Lives, the souls, gathered before Lachesis, are addressed by a prophet. Displaying before them the lots and models of lives that he has taken from Lachesis, he tells the souls that another cycle of birth and death is upon them, and they must choose their own lives. Virtue has no master (*aretê…adespoton*), so that each soul attains to her to the exact degree that it honors her. Blame for a poor choice of lives lies with the one who chooses; God is blameless (*theos anaitios*).

This passage further confirms that God is not culpable for the existence of evil. Souls are responsible for their own choices of lives. Proclus has this in mind when he discredits Plotinus' view that matter is largely responsible for soul's sinfulness, despite soul's own weakness.

10) *Sophist* 257b–259b: The Eleatic Stranger argues that to say *that which is not* is not to say something contrary to "that which is," but only something different from it. Otherness or alterity is thus not the same as contrariety. Like knowledge, the Stranger continues, otherness is divided into parts. For example, there is a specific otherness that pertains to *the beautiful*, the *not beautiful*, and it is both particularlized as one of the things that are and placed against the things that are. To say *not beautiful* is thus to set a being over against a being. Its being is no less than that of *the beautiful*. Therefore *that which is not* is among the things that exist and possesses its own nature.

Platonists appeal to this passage to explain the manner in which evil can be said to exist as privation of the Good. Proclus repeatedly insists in *DMS* that evil must be placed among the things that exist, although he would likely have found problematic the Stranger's remark that *that which is not* has a nature of its own. For Proclus, evil's existence is entirely dependent upon its relationship to the Good, its 'being' deriving totally from its opposition to the Good. Now, of course, in the context of Proclus' metaphysical system one must say that all things owe their existence to the Good; but he seems to make evil's dependence something different from that found in the rest of creation, perhaps seeing it as the extreme manifestation of all dependence.

11) *Phaedrus* 246c–248c: Socrates first attempts to describe the form of the soul by likening it to the "compound power" of two winged horses and a charioteer. He then turns to an explanation of why a living being is mortal, stating first as a general rule that the soul as a whole is concerned with what lacks soul (*pasa hê psukhê pantos epimeleitai tou apsukhou*). For the soul that has lost its wings this means that, by contrast with the soul that is fully "winged," it descends and enters a body. The resulting compound is the living being, which is mortal. Turning to the question of how the

> soul loses its wings, Socrates enters upon an account of how Zeus in his chariot leads a procession of deities and spirits through the heavens. Of the souls that follow in the procession, even the best experience trouble in seeing the higher reality due to the disturbance caused by their horses. They vie to reach above but inevitably collide in violent confusion. As such, souls "become heavy" through being filled with "forgetfulness and evil" and descend to earth where Destiny dictates that those that have followed God to any extent will be spared from harm in their first life.

This passage, in conjunction with *Timaeus* 42d–e, confirmed again for most Platonists that God is not to blame for our sinfulness, and that there are no intermediate beings to whom responsibility is to be attributed. We ourselves are responsible. Not all Platonists fully accepted this notion. For example, the idea that matter exerts a kind of attraction on the soul, luring it to immersion in materiality and thus vice, became prominent. This is the position of Plotinus and others, who point to what Plato says in *Timaeus* 52d–53e concerning how the trace-forms and matter bring to each other reciprocal disturbances that become the disorderly motion. Resistance to this position came from those, particularly the later Neoplatonists, including Proclus, who stressed a more consistently monistic doctrine that denies that matter possesses any such negative power. Proclus points to 248a–c, where we are told that the disturbance of the soul's horses begins while the soul is still aloft, as proof that, according to Plato, soul's contact with evil occurs before its descent.

Rival Schools

Such strategies for interpreting Plato were developed in part as a means of defending Plato against attacks from two formidable groups of opponents, the Peripatetics, with their criticisms both of Plato's claim that matter is the principle of evil and of his account of a pre-cosmic chaos, and the Stoics, who, as materialists, presented a quite different version of a monistic theory of evil. The various attempts on the part of Platonists to respond to both of these schools played a significant role in shaping their doctrines. It will be helpful, then, to outline here the positions of each of these schools.

Stoicism

Much of the effort of Platonists in dealing with the fundamental questions regarding evil is informed by Platonists' reaction to Stoic ethics.[22] The common criticism of the Stoics coming from both the monistic and dualistic 'factions' of Platonism is that, with but two principles of the cosmos, a passive matter that is neither good nor evil and an all-pervasive God, either they can provide no cause for the existence of evil or they foolishly force themselves to implicate their God.[23] As we would expect, their failure in this regard is attributed to the fact that they ignored or misinterpreted Plato. To some extent this criticism was justified; the Stoics, like all monists, were challenged with offering an explanation for the cause of evil that avoids a dualism, while at the same time releasing God from responsibility.[24] If evil is, indeed, real, then its occurrence must in every case be the result of what primarily produces good, but secondarily (through some imperfection, miscalculation, inability to master irrational urges, etc.) brings about the opposite. This seems to be Plutarch's understanding of the Stoic dilemma. They provide no cause for evil among their first principles, he contends, insofar as evil happens as a "incidental consequence" (*kat' epakolouthêsin*) of actions that are necessarily good in both the intentions of their agents and their primary effects.[25] But if they deny the existence of evil on a cosmic level, how can they at the same time consistently maintain the reality of vice?[26] So the question remains for the Stoics, as it did for

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[22] See, in general, Schröder (1916), 38ff., Brisson (1974), 63 and 70, and Opsomer and Steel (1999[2]), 241ff. On Plutarch's criticism of the Stoic theory of evil, cf. Schicker (1995), 382ff.; on that of Plutarch, cf. Festugière (1983), 211, n. 3; on that of Plotinus, cf. O'Meara (1999), 118. See also Calcidius, *In Tim.* cc. 294 and 297. Proclus' emphasis on the full reach of divine Providence is, no doubt, in part a reaction to the Epicurean and Sceptic traditions. See Den Boeft (1970), 74 and Opsomer and Steel (1999[2]). On Proclus' formulation of the standard argument against the Stoic position on the existence of evil, that they reduced what is only apparent evil to a good, see Steel (1998), 85, with reference to *De dec. dub.* c. 26.

[23] Cf. Calcidius, *In Tim.* c. 294. Cf. O'Meara (1999), 93f. and 146; Baltes (1996), 495.

[24] See the analysis of Sharples (1994), 171–181, on how the Stoics dealt with this problem.

[25] *De an. procr.* 1015C. Cf. Kerferd (1978), 493f.; Long (1968), 333, and n. 17; Opsomer and Steel (1999[2]), 237f.; O'Meara (1999), 93f. The argument is Chrysippean. See also Marcus Aurelius 6, 36. Long notes that, according to Aurelius, evil exists as exclusively a "by-product" of the good whether it is intended (*hormêsanta*) or is merely incidental (*ep' epakolouthêsin*) to what is intended.

[26] *De Stoic. rep.* 1048D; 1049D; 1050A–D.

Proclus as he formulated his own monistic doctrine: if evil does exist on some level, what actually *is* its cause, or what *are* its causes? It is not at all clear whether or to what degree they succeeded in adducing such a theory; in fact, there is no firm evidence of a truly coherent theory of evil in Stoicism at all.[27] We do have record of a number of what seem to be quite disparate attempts to account for the source of evil: according to Calcidius, some Stoics say that the source is a certain "perversity" that is somehow connected with the stars, although they do not explain how the perversity itself originates;[28] and for Chrysippus, the cause of moral evil is a willful *scaevitas* in the spirit of people that "impels" them to sin,[29] while natural evil is the necessary but incidental consequence of good actions;[30] for Epictetus, moral evil is a matter of misjudgment;[31] for other Stoics, evil is identified with the Necessity implanted in matter.[32] And there are also a number of references to attempts to explain moral evil by way of the concept of perversion in the pursuit of virtue.[33] However, that the two most basic Platonist complaints against Stoic evil are that the Stoics provide no cause for evil and that they deny its existence in asserting that God is the cause of all things,[34] shows that most Platonists focused on the metaphysical aspects of the Stoic doctrine. To avoid the Stoic dilemma, they were careful to aim at providing a sufficient explanation for the existence of evil without abandoning the idea of God's providential reach over all of the cosmos. As we shall see, after Plotinus the Neoplatonic answer is to postulate multiple causes for evil rather than a single principle.

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[27] Cf. Long (1968), 329f. According to Kerferd (1978), 487ff., sinfulness begins from irrational impulses (*hormai*) which are indistinguishable from rational impulses, so that evil actually comes to be within what is good. There is therefore no need for the Stoics to introduce an external principle to account for it.

[28] cc. 297–298 and cf. c. 174. Van Winden (1959) notes that there are no parallel passages indicating such a doctrine among Stoics (115f.). It is not clear whether the Stoics mentioned by Calcidius were referring to natural or moral evil (or both). But, of course, the only real evil for them is moral evil. Cf. Sharples (1994), 171.

[29] Cf. Aulus Gellius *Noct. Att.* 7.1 = SVF 2. 1169: *sua…scaevitate et voluntario impetu…*

[30] Plutarch, *De an. procr.* 1015C, takes the Stoics to task for pointing up the Epicureans' failure to provide a cause for evil, when they themselves have also failed to do so, since they claim that evil has no source among the first principles, but comes about as a secondary consequence (*kat' epakolouthesin*) of the action of those principles. On this idea, see Long (1968), 333; Kerferd (1978), 493; Sharples (1994), 178; Opsomer and Steel (1999^2), 237, n. 43 and 242f.

[31] Cf. Long (1968), 334ff.

[32] SVF 2. 1136; cf. Plutarch's reply, 1076C = SVF 2. 1168.

[33] Cf. Den Boeft (1970), 58ff. (on Calcidius cc. 165–167) and SVF 3. 228–236.

[34] Cf. Thévenaz (1938), 67f. and 118f.

Aristotle

Perhaps the earliest interpreter of Plato to have understood him to argue that matter as the principle of evil is Aristotle. That Plato's theory of evil is untenable he demonstrates by pointing out the absurdities to which it leads.[35] He identifies Platonic matter with the Mother, Nurse, and Receptacle of *Timaeus* 51a–52b; for the most part, however, he views it within the context of his own doctrine: Plato's matter is the potentiality of each thing and so a cause; it is, in one sense, substance; as substrate to all things, it desires and partakes in form. This being matter's nature, several illogical conclusions follow if we agree with Plato that it as the principle of evil: (1) evil will be what is potentially good; (2) evil will be the place (*khora*) in which good is actualized; (3) evil will desire and partake in what will destroy it. Moreover, evil, as the contrary of the Good, must be absolute non-existence; but as substance, cause, and substrate, matter exists. It is not-being only to the extent that it possesses privation (*sterêsis*) as an attribute. The true "agent of evil" (*to kakopoion*) is privation itself, which qualifies as absolute not-being and so as the contrary of the Good. This critique had a profound effect on later Platonists.[36] As we see from the example of Plotinus, those who made matter the source of evil rejected Aristotle's distinction between matter and privation, making privation part of the nature of matter. Others, such as Proclus, who denied that matter is absolute evil to this extent found an ally in Aristotle, and often repeated his criticisms as part of their attacks against rival Platonists. But their embrace of the Stagerite was not without exception. For example, Proclus agrees with Aristotle that evil is privation and that it must be separate from matter, since matter cannot be the contrary of the Good and it is one of the causes of generation. But he does not accept that this privation is absolute not-being, for evil does indeed belong to the class of existing things. Most likely Proclus, like other Platonists, interpreted Aristotle's concept of privation as *to kakopoion* as confirmation of his belief that the principle of evil is absolute, and to this Proclus strongly objected.

[35] These arguments are found in *Phys.* 192a13–25; *Meta.* 988a14–15; 1091b30–1092a4.

[36] Hager (1987), 78ff., however, notes that Aristotle's opposition to the dualism of the Old Academy was quite influential in the metaphysical doctrines of Middle Platonism. For a good discussion of Aristotle's concept of evil and its possible influence on Neoplatonism, see Menn (1998), 103ff.

While Proclan evil is privation, it nonetheless possesses certain features of Aristotelian matter.

It should also be noted that Aristotle finds fault with Plato's treatment of the "discordant and disorderly motion" of the elements (*Timaeus* 30a and 52d–53b) which existed before the Demiurge brought order in creating the universe. In his analysis of the distinction between natural and unnatural motions in bodies in *De caelo* (300b16–26), he asserts that all unnatural motions, by definition, contravene natural motions. Thus any series of unnatural motions must begin with a natural motion, or else there is an infinite regress. The latter case is exactly what we have, however, in Plato's account of the pre-cosmic chaotic motion in *Timaeus*. For otherwise—that is, if the irrational motion was initiated by a motion natural to the elements—the state of affairs that Plato is describing is not pre-cosmic at all, but is rather already an ordered universe. The first cause, through its own natural movement, must then cause all bodies to move naturally toward their natural places of rest—heavier bodies toward and lighter bodies away from the center. What would result is a cosmos with all its constituent parts arranged and distributed in a rational way. Whether the "disorderly" movement of the elements was externally or self-caused, he contends, the ultimate cause must be the Prime Mover. Thus, there could never have been a period of pre-cosmic disorder at all, nor can bodies possess unnatural movements.[37] Although Aristotle does not link these passages from *Timaeus* with Plato's theory of evil, as we shall see, Platonists who did so—Proclus among them—were forced to find some way to meet his objections in order to prove Plato's theory to be consistent.

According to Aristotle, then, Plato offers no sufficient explanation for the causes of good and evil. He concludes that Plato made the elements the sources of good and evil,[38] but, since they are material, they cannot be eternal, nor can they be self-moved. In fact, soul, Plato's principle of self-motion, must be left out of consideration insofar as in his account soul is generated later, at the same time as the creation of the heavens.[39]

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[37] At *De caelo* 279b33ff. Aristotle argues that the Platonists' distinction between the periods of disorder and order in *Timaeus* must be temporal and not purely conceptual, since the two periods are contradictory. Thus, the universe was created in time and is not eternal. See the comments of Simplicius, *De caelo* 583,22ff.; also Matter (1964), 189f. and Baltes (1978), 156, n. 276.

[38] *Meta.* 988a14f.

[39] *Meta.* 1071b31–1072a2.

Along with this outline of the exegetical tradition of Platonism, it will also be helpful to provide at the outset a somewhat detailed examination of Proclus' doctrine of evil with a view to assessing the extent to which it was a reaction both to his Stoic and Peripatetic opponents and to earlier doctrines within the same tradition of exegesis of Plato. In this initial chapter, and in the more focused chapters to follow, we shall see that Proclus, in formulating his doctrine, in certain respects incorporates the Platonic tradition that he inherited, while in other respects he (or, more precisely, the post-Plotinian Neoplatonists) advances that doctrine.

CHAPTER ONE

PROCLUS' DOCTRINE OF EVIL

Texts

1.1 [*DMS* c. 1, p. 172,18–20] But above everything else and before all things we must grasp Plato's doctrine of evil, for we shall be regarded as having accomplished nothing if we vary from his theory.

1.2 [*DMS* c. 3, p. 176,11–25] …But also if, as Plato's account has it, the father of this world not only brings into existence the nature of good things but also wishes that there be no evil at all, what device is there to allow evil to come into existence against the will of the creator? For it is not proper that what he creates be different from what he wills, but among divine substances will and creation must occur together; so that not only is evil unwilled by him, but it is also non-existent, not in the sense that the creator does not create it—it is not right to think this—but in the sense that he causes it not to exist. For his will was not that evil not come to be through him, but that it absolutely not exist. What, then, is there to create evil if the foundation and Father of all things leads it to not-being? What is there to oppose him and from where could it come? Evil-doing does not originate in the creator—it is not right that it come from him—and it is absurd if it derives from some other sources. For all things in the world come from the Father, some directly from him himself, as has been said, and others from the activities of other principles.

1.3 [*DMS* c. 31, pp. 210,1 – 212,21] But if what opposes nature in bodies is due to the dominance of matter, as has been claimed, and if evil in souls and their weakness comes through their fall into matter and through their becoming like matter because they are drunk with its indeterminateness, why should we dismiss matter from the account and seek another cause of evils as the principle and source of their existence? But if evil is matter—for we must pass again to other possibilities—one of two things is necessary: either we must make

the Good the cause of evil or concede that there are two principles of things. For anything that exists in any sense must either be the principle of all things or be generated from that principle. But matter, if it exists because of a principle, itself has its coming-to-be from the Good; while if it is a principle, then we must posit two principles of things in opposition to each other: one the primary Good and the other the primary evil. But this is impossible. For there cannot be two first principles. For how could they come to be at all if there is no monad? And if each of these two principles is one, then before both of them there must be the one, by virtue of which both of them are one, and one principle. Nor can evil derive from the Good. For if the cause of good things is good to a greater degree, then in the same way also what generates evil will be evil to a greater degree. And the Good will not have its proper nature if it generates the principle of evil. But if it is always the case that what is created tends to resemble what creates it, then even evil itself will be good, having been made good by participation in its own cause. Therefore the Good will be evil as the cause of evil, while evil will be good as the creation of the Good.

1.4 [*DMS* c. 35, pp. 216,4 – 218,28] …That matter also cannot be considered primary evil Socrates, I think, has sufficiently shown in *Philebus* when he generates the Unlimited from God. If we are to say that matter is in itself the Unlimited, then matter derives from God; if, that is, we are to say that the primary Unlimited and the substantial limitlessness deriving from one cause have been generated from God—and this is especially the case for the Unlimited which is unable to make a mixture with Limit. For God is the cause both of their existence and of their mixture. This, then, is to bring the nature of body *qua* body under one cause, *viz*. God. For it is he who produced the mixture. Therefore neither body nor matter is evil, for both are the products of God, the one as mixture and the other as unlimited. That the Unlimited is to be ranked above matter Plato himself indicates elsewhere when he says, "Have not the three kinds provided us all things that have been created and all things from which they have come to be?" So the body—since it is a unity of all parts, because it is a mixture, on the one hand having limit and reason in itself, while on the other it is unlimited—will derive from there in two ways, both with respect to the whole and with respect to the parts. What else but matter is in itself unlimited? What else in it but form is limit? And what else but the whole could come from both of these? So if all things that

are created and their sources of creation are mixture, the Limited and the Unlimited, and if what constitutes all things here is some other and "fourth kind," as Plato says, then we shall maintain that neither matter nor form nor the mixture can derive from any other source than God. But what thing generated from God will be evil? For it is not the nature of heat to produce cold nor of good to produce evil. So neither matter nor body should be considered evil.

1.5 [*DMS* c. 36, pp. 218,1 – 220,9] Perhaps, then, someone will ask us what we ourselves have to say about matter, and whether we believe that it is good or evil, and how we are to argue for either position. Let this be our stance: matter is neither good nor evil. For if it is good, then it will be an end and not the last of all things, a for-the-sake-of-which and an object of desire. Everything of this kind is good, since the primary Good is the end and that for the sake of which all things exist and the object of desire for all existing things. But if, on the other hand, matter is evil, then it will be a god and a second principle of entities that opposes the cause of what is good, and there will be what has been called the "two sources" that come together as opposites, one the source of what is good and the other of what is evil…

1.6 [*DMS* c. 41, pp. 230,1 – 232,29] What has been said previously will suffice to counter those who say that there is one source of evils. For all the gods and all the sources are causes of good things, while they are not now and never will become causes of any evil. If, as we said before and as Socrates puts it in *Phaedrus*, "everything divine is good, beautiful, and wise" (246d8–e1), either it will act against its nature in bringing about the generation of evils or everything that takes its existence from there will possess the form of the Good and will be the offspring of that goodness that remains in itself. But, as they say, neither is it the nature of fire to produce cold nor of good to produce evil from itself. Therefore one of two things must be true: either evil, if it derives from God, does not exist as evil, or it exists but does not derive from God. But we have already shown that it exists. So "there are other causes of evils and not God," as Plato somewhere teaches (*Republic* 379c6–7), assigning to all good things a derivation from one cause, but attributing the generation of all evils to other causes, not a divine one. For everything that derives its existence from there is good. Therefore the All is good; and there the light of goodness that, as it were, comes from the heart, is among the gods, while all other light and brightness derive from that light, and all

potency and any part of its potency. But those blessed and really happy are those who say that evils, too, are embellished and given measure by the gods and that their indetermination and darkness are given limits by them inasmuch as they receive a portion of the good and are granted the power of existence. They named this embellishing and ordering cause the source of evils, not insofar as it is their generating mother—for it could not happen that the first causes of beings is the principle of the generation of evils—but insofar as they are they impart to them their limit and determination and illuminate with their own light their obscurity. Indeed, in the case of evils, lack of limit stems from partial causes, while limit stems from whole causes. For this reason what is an evil for the particular is not an evil for the wholes. For their lack of limit does not exist because of their power, such that they participate in the nature of the Good by virtue of their limitlessness, but because of their deficiency in power; but in equal manner they are strengthened by the Good through their participation in limit.

1.7 [*DMS* c. 42, p. 232,1–23] Those, therefore, who think this way and are not persuaded that the generation of evils does not take place through an absence of order, have made God the cause of the order of evils. But I find that not only the barbarians, but also the most eminent thinkers among the Greeks have left to the gods the knowledge of all things good and evil and grant to good things a generation directly from the gods, but to evils they assign the power of existence and limit only to the extent that they too have received a part of the Good. For evil is not unmixed evil, as has often been said, but is evil in one sense and good in another. To the extent that it is good it derives from the gods, but to the extent that it is evil it comes from another impotent cause. Every evil comes to be because of impotence and deficiency, since the good received its existence from potency and in potency; its power is of and in it [the Good]. If evil were unmixed evil and evil simply, it would be unknown to the gods, since they are good and they can make good all things that derive their being from them, that is, all things of which they have cognizance, since their cognitions are active powers and generate all things of which they are said to be cognitions. But because it is at once evil and good, and not in one sense good and in another evil, but all that exists is good and to a greater degree good because it is good for the All, we must not deny that the gods possess the knowledge of evil nor that its creation is through them, but the gods know and create evil as good. And so, in the same manner, by knowing

evil they possess it, and in them the causes of evils are the powers that bring good to the nature of those evils, just as if someone would say of the forms that they are the intellectual powers that form the nature of the unformed.

1.8 [*DMS* c. 43, pp. 232,1 – 234,33] But this is good, because our discussion has passed to Forms and the order of Forms. For could it not be from the Forms that, perhaps, evils and the generations of evils come? Or from what source can their permanence derive? For all eternal being proceeds from some cause that is immutable and determined. So if evil is eternal in its "revolution around mortal nature" (*Theaetetus* 176a7–8), what is its eternality and whence does it come? For we deny that it can come from any other cause than one that is always the same and with an immutable nature. But this is the nature of the Forms, and what eternally exists is good. And what could there be in the intellectual realm that is not good? So if this is good, then each thing that comes to be by relation to it is good—for what is made like the Good is good, but evil *qua* evil is not suited by nature to be made like the Good. We say that the man who is made like the intellective Forms is perfect and happy, but in a completely opposite manner we call the evil man miserable and unhappy. Therefore the evil man *qua* evil is not made similar to intellect. But if this is the case, then there will not be paradigms of evils in Intellect; for every image is the image of a paradigm. But if Plato calls the Forms the most divine of beings—for the Eleatic Stranger says that it belongs to the most divine of all beings alone to maintain themselves in sameness—but the paradigm of evils is "without God and obscure" (*Theaetetus* 176e3–4), as has been said, what device will those who place such a nature in the Forms employ to produce evil from this realm? And if the Demiurge of the universe, in whom are all Forms and the number of Forms, wishes that there be no evil in the All and wants to generate "all things so as to be like himself" (*Timaeus* 29e3), but nothing evil, then how will he possess the paradigm of evils when he "makes all things good and allows nothing that is base to exist" (*Timaeus* 30a2–3)? For it cannot be that he fabricates and creates with respect to some of the Forms, and is sterile and unproductive with respect to others. Rather, bringing forth all things by his very being, he works in an indivisible way. [Otherwise] there would be a Form of evil generating evil things, and the Demiurge would not do only that which he wishes to do nor will his will match his nature. It would be as if fire were to heat and dry out different things,

performing the one act willingly and the other not. Therefore one of two things is necessary: either the divine Intellect wills that evils exist and come to be, if he by his essence is the father of evil things as well, or he does not will to generate or produce such evils or to possess their reason-principles, by which he brings into existence all the individual entities of the world.

1.9 [*DMS* c. 47, p. 240,1–17] But if these souls are not the causes of evils, what shall we maintain to be their cause? We must in no way maintain one cause of evils by itself. For if there is one cause of what is good, there are many causes of what is evil, not one. If all good things are commensurate, similar, and possess an affinity to each other, then evils are wholly contrary and have symmetry neither with each other nor with what is good. And so if things that are similar to each other should have one cause, but dissimilar things should have a plurality of causes—for those things that come from a single cause all are friendly, sympathetic, and agreeable with each other (cf. *Theaetetus* 146a7–8), some more so and others less—then for those who maintain that there are many causes of evils and not one, different ones for souls and bodies, evil must be sought from and in these causes. This, it seems to me, is what Socrates in *Republic* implies, since he refused to say that there is a divine cause for these evils: "For evils we must seek other causes" (379c6–7). In this way he points out that these causes are multiple, indeterminate, and particular. For what kind of monad or determination or eternal reason can be attributed to evils whose existence is by virtue of dissimilarity and indetermination as far as the indivisible minima? But the All is completely devoid of evil.

1.10 [*DMS* c. 50, pp. 242,1 – 246,51] We should therefore discuss what the mode of evil is and how it exists from these causes and non-causes, since we claim here that it is what is called a secondary existence (*parhupostasis*). For no other form of existence is possible for what in no sense has come to be from a principal cause, nor has relation to a determined end and 'that for-the-sake-of-which,' nor in itself shares in the progression towards being, since everything whatsoever that exists in the proper and true sense comes to be by nature from a cause—for it is impossible for anything to come to be without a cause—and directs the order of its generation to some end. In which category, then, are we to place evil—or does it belong to those things whose being is by chance, by virtue of something external, and not through a principle

proper to it? For all that we do and accomplish by ourselves is for the purpose of participating in the Good, and we look to it, in a sense give birth to it, and always desire it. And what comes from this is in one perspective right but is in another not right: not right because we judge what is not good to be good, and right because we act seeking to obtain the good; and right because we seek the universal, but wrong when what we seek is the particular. So what we desire is one thing and what comes about and is the attainment of the desire is another; the former is the nature of the good and the latter its contrary. When the contrary comes to be, if it is in any way contrary because of the weakness of the creator and the incommensurability to what comes to be, if we say of what comes to be that it exists rather than that it has a secondary existence, then we speak correctly. Or existence belongs to those things that progress from a principle to an end, while secondary existence belongs to those things that do not by nature manifest themselves from a principle nor reach their perfection in a determined end. As for evils, their generation has no a principal cause in the sense of something that creates them—for nature is not the cause of what opposes nature nor is reason the cause of what opposes reason—nor do they attain an end, that for the sake of which everything that is created comes to be. So by "secondary existence" we must mean such a generation that lacks an end and is unintended, one that is completely uncaused and indeterminate. Nor does it have one cause, nor is its cause a cause *per se* or principally, one that creates it by looking to evil itself and its nature, nor is it a cause that is neither *per se* nor principal, but just the opposite. For everything that comes to be does so for the sake of the good, but evil is extrinsic and adventitious, the lack of fulfillment of any proper end. And the lack of fulfillment is due to the weakness of the creating cause, because this cause has been allotted a nature that is, by turns, better and worse. Where the One is, there is also the Good; but evil is in the divided nature and is not one, since multiplicity includes incommensurability, disharmony, and contrariety, and from these derive weakness and indigence. Even among the gods there is the "winged nature" along with each of the "two horses," although there "all are good" and from the good and not "from the opposites" (*Phaedrus* 286a); but where there is a mixture of other things, here is multiplicity and a diversity of powers, each pursuing a different course. So in the former place the multiplicity looks to the One and is determined according to one form of life, but where multiplicity and diversity come to light because of the waning of the unifying power,

here arises the want of power—for every power is what it is through the One and out of the One—, disharmony and opposition, brought about by the appetites, of one thing to another.

We have therefore discussed how evils are generated and what is called their "secondary existence" and from what they derive.

1.11 [*DMS* c. 53, pp. 250,1 – 252,18] If what we say is correct, we must say that evil never possesses action or power, but rather that its action and power stem from its contrary. The good becomes weak and inefficacious due to its mixture with evil and evil gains a portion of virtue and activity by the presence in it of the good. For both are in one thing. And, as in bodies the contrary becomes matter for its contrary, and what follows nature strengthens what opposes nature—or from what source could the latter come by measure, periods, and the order of the periods unless from the natural numbers and from a disposition that follows nature?—while what opposes nature weakens what follows nature, as nature loses its power to act and the order residing in the good of nature is dissolved—so in the same way, in souls, evil, when it overcomes the good, uses the good's power for its own benefit; that is, that power of reason and what it discovers it employs for its own appetites. And each in turn passes along to the other something of its own nature, one giving a part of its power and the other a part of its weakness, since in itself evil does not possess a nature either to act or to exert power. For all power is good, and all activity is an extension of power. How could what is an evil for those beings that empower it be a power, if the function of every power is to preserve both that which possesses it and that in which it exists, while evil destroys everything for which it is an evil?

1.12 [*DMS* c. 55, p. 254,1–18] We must next discuss what and how many different kinds of evil there are. We have already said that evil is one thing in souls and another in bodies; and that it is of two sorts in souls, one coming to be in the irrational form of life and the other in reason. We should add now that there are three subjects in which evil resides: the particular soul, the image of the soul, and the body of individual beings. If, then, the good of the superior soul is in accordance with intellect—for intellect is anterior to it—and the good of the irrational soul is in accordance with reason—for the good for each thing comes from its immediate superior—, while in turn the good of the body is in accordance with nature—for this is the principle of its

motion and rest—, then necessarily evil for the first of these opposes intellect in that it is the sub-contrary of what accords with intellect, the evil of the irrational soul, whose good accords with reason, opposes reason, and evil for the body [whose good accords with nature] opposes nature. And these three forms of evil are inherent in the three natures since they are susceptible to weakening through the submission of their essence to the particular. As we have often said, the wholes always are in possession of their proper good; but evil is here, I mean in particulars and individuals in which there are both a defect of power due to the submission of their being and an increase in diversity which attends a decrease in unity.

1.13 [*DMS* c. 56, pp. 254,1 – 256,17] In general, evil in souls is one thing and that in bodies another, and evil in souls is of two kinds, one a sickness and the other a baseness, as the Eleatic Stranger at one point says. Baseness is ignorance and privation of intellect, while sickness is in turn a dissension in the soul and a deficiency of the life according to reason. And so evil will be threefold, but each of these will be of two sorts. For baseness is different depending on whether it concerns discursive reasoning or opinion, since the mode of thinking is different. With respect to the first it is a deficiency in science and with respect to the second it is a deficiency in skill [in achieving knowledge]. Moreover, sickness is one thing in forms of knowledge and another in impulses. For the appetites do not accord with reason; and many appetites belong to the senses and give rise to the imagination. For those involved in a life of action, the appetites are impediments; while for those whose life is in contemplative activities, the imagination intervenes and robs them of their purity and immateriality. And what opposes nature is of two kinds: both baseness that opposes nature in the body—this is both a weakness and defect of form—and sickness when the order and symmetry in it are dissolved.

1.14 [*DMS* c. 58, p. 256,1–6] Someone might doubt how and from what source evils exist if there is Providence. If evil does exist, how will it not oppose providential activity directed toward the Good? If the universe is filled with Providence, how can evil exist in things? Some thinkers have adopted one or the other of two explanations, either that not all things come to be from Providence, if evil [exists, or that evil] does not exist, if all things derive from Providence and the Good. This quandary troubles the soul…

1.15 [*DMS* c. 60, pp. 260,1 – 262,7] But how can what is evil in bodies be at the same time also good? Is it because it conforms to nature for the whole, while for the part it opposes nature; or, rather, because for the part it conforms to nature to the extent that it acts with a view to the whole, while it opposes nature to the extent that it is separated from the whole? The evil that belongs to bodies is twofold, one deformity and the other disease—I mean by deformities all things besides diseases that oppose nature…

1.16 [*DMS* c. 61, pp. 262,1 – 264,24] The evil in bodies is not therefore unmixed evil, but is to a certain extent evil, insofar as it is not from above, yet also to a certain extent good, insofar as it derives from the providence of nature. In general, how can anyone say that those things that have come to be because of the Good entirely lack the Good and remain without participation in the nature of the Good? For it is not possible that evil exist without taking on the appearance of its contrary, the Good, since all things are for the sake of the Good, even evil itself. But all things are for the sake of the Good, and the divine is the not the cause of evils. For evil does not come from above insofar as it is evil, but comes from other causes through which, as we have said, generation is not due to some power, but exist through weakness. This, it seems to me, is the reason why Plato establishes that all things are around the King of all and exist for his sake, including what is not good. For having taken on the appearance of what is good, they are among things that exist. Similarly he names this the cause of all good things and not of all things *simpliciter*; for it is not the cause of evils. But it is both not the cause of these evils and the cause of all being. For it is the cause of evils only to the extent that they belong to the class of existing things and in the sense that each thing is good. If what we say is correct, then all things will derive from Providence and evil will have a place among existing entities. Hence the gods also create evil, but only in as much as it is good. And they know it insofar as they have a unified cognition of all things, knowing divisible things in an indivisible manner, evils as the good, and plurality as unified. For there is one form of cognition belonging to soul, another belonging to the intellectual nature, and another that is of the gods themselves. The first is self-moving, the second is eternal knowledge, and the last is ineffable and unitary, knowing and producing all things through the One itself.

1.17 [*In Tim.* I 365,26 – 376,19] If the creator of the All is beyond all need, then he is exempt from all weakness (*astheneias*)…and as much as is possible makes all things good, [and] he illuminates the measure of the Good for all things… And if he wishes to furnish all things with participation in the Good, then nothing in the All is completely evil, so that there is nothing that is disorderly, beyond Providence, or unlimited, but all things share in beauty and order to the extent that they are naturally suited to receive them. [God makes all things good by making them as much as possible like himself.] Plato, then, makes clear here what the Good is, when he says [30a] that God "brings order" to what is disorderly because of his wish for [its] participation in what is good. From all this it is easy to conclude that the Demiurge creates eternally, and the universe is everlasting because of the everlastingness that extends over all time…

[373,22] …Is there no evil in this world, or shall we grant that there is also in a sense what is called sinfulness (*kakian*) both in bodies and in souls? For proceeding from this dilemma some did away with evil entirely, while others give up the idea of Providence, the first group being convinced that if Providence exists then all things are good, and others not convinced that, if evils exist, then events are governed by Providence. For if God wills the existence of evil, how can he be good? It is the function of a good God, whose essence includes the Good, to make the All good, just as it is also the function of what is hot, the essence of which is hotness, to create heat. It is not right for what is good to do anything except what is good. [374] But if [God] does not will [the existence of evil], how does evil exist? For nothing could come to be against the will of the Father of all things. Such, then, is the dilemma. But those who heed the very words of Plato must say in accordance with our teacher that there is, indeed, another manner of relationship both of God and of us ourselves to events, and in turn of events both to the divine and to us. For wholes have a different rational-principle with respect to composites, and composites [*sc.* have different rational-principles] with respect to each other. So to God nothing is evil, including all the so-called evils. For he uses even these to good ends. But, in turn, for composites there does exist a kind of evil, and it is part of their nature to suffer from it. And the same thing is evil to the composite entity, yet not evil, but good, to the All and to wholes. For insofar as it possesses being and shares in some order, it is good… If there is no absolute evil, but [evil] is bound up with the Good, you shall give it a place among existing things and you shall

make it good for those entities that are whole. For how [will there be absolute evil] if [evil] is an existing thing? For that which exists shares in being; what shares in being also shares in unity; what shares in unity shares in good. So evil, if it exists, shares in good. Therefore evil does not exist absolutely, nor is it entirely discordant or limitless. Who, then, makes it this way? Who offers it measure, order, and limit? Clearly it is the Demiurge, he who makes everything like himself. This [Demiurge] fills both the wholes and the composites with what is good. Certainly if he makes all things good and gives a tinge of the Good to evil itself, there is nothing trivial about both the power of God or about that of the beings that receive [the Good]. [375] For the power is twofold, one belonging to the God and making much-accursed sinfulness good, and the other belonging to what receive [the Good], which, by the measure of their own order, partake in the goodness of the Demiurge. So for the Demiurge who wills that there be no evil, nothing is evil.

But if some people blame him for being the cause of evils because he brings into existence composites, they thereby preclude the cosmic creation, they overturn the productive power of the wholes, they confuse the nature of the first things with the nature of the last. That what we say agrees with Plato's thinking is easy to see from what is written. For in *Statesman* [273bc] he says explicitly, "From the creator of all things fair things come, but from the pre-existing condition [*emprosthen hexiôs*] all things that are unjust and grievous in the heavens come to be." For, since there are genesis and destruction, what is contrary to nature also has a secondary existence [*parhupostasin*], and since what is shameful in matter fills the composite souls with shamefulness through their lingering around it, for this reason what opposes reason also gains a sort of secondary existence. Nevertheless all of these things become fair [*kala*] due to the goodness of the creator of the All. In *Republic* [379c] [Plato says], "The cause of good must be attributed to nothing other than God, but we must seek for the causes of evil in some other things." Through these words he makes it clear that evil does not derive from God—for, they say, cold does not come from fire nor heat from snow nor the generation of evil from what is completely good—and [it is clear] that its causes are composite and limitless. For it is not the case that, just as among things that are good the One and the primary Good are superior to multiplicity, so it is also among things that are evil, because of the limitless stream of sinfulness. Thus the words "other" and "some" [*Republic* 379c] reveal the composite and limitless

nature [376] of the causes of sinfulness… And so in his view evil exists, it issues from composite causes, and it is made good due to the inherently good Providence of the Demiurge, because there is no absolute evil, but evil exists in the sense in which it makes each being complete in accordance with justice and God. Let us analyze it as follows. Of all things in the cosmos some are wholes and others parts; and of those that are parts some everlastingly guard their own good, such as the composite intellect and the classes of composite divinities, while others are not always able to preserve their proper good.

1.18 [*In Tim.* I 379,26 – 380,2] However, let us begin again and take another approach to the investigation. If someone should ask us whether God willed or did not will the existence of evil, we will say, "Both." For he willed [its existence] insofar as he furnishes the existence of all things. Everything that exists in any way in the All is derived from the demiurgic cause. But he did not will [its existence] insofar as he makes all things good. [380] For even evil he hid in the tinting of the Good.

1.19 [*In Tim.* III 302,31 – 303,23] We must not attribute the nature of evils to the divine. For the creator of the entire cosmos is said in these texts to bear no responsibility for them; and the Demiurge is thus portrayed not only in these texts, but also the prophet in *Republic* (617de) who announces the message of Lachesis says that responsibility belongs "to the one who chooses. God is blameless." So God is neither ultimate cause (*proaitios*) nor [*sc.* proximate] cause of evils, but is blameless. "For he willed that as far as possible nothing trivial exist," as it is said in the previous passage (30a); so, then, we should not attribute evil to the divine nor say that it is without beginning (for if it is without beginning it will be disordered, limitless, and a corrupting influence on all of creation. For what will it be able to bring to order if it has no first principle among existing things?); nor should we grant it a first principle, since this belongs to wholes (none of the wholes is receptive of sinfulness, but all of the wholes perpetually maintain the same undefiled and sinless nature). Clearly, then, evil comes into existence from a partial principle. And how does it come to be from this? Through a guiding. And how does it come to be from this? Through a *hupostasis* guided from above? No, for what come into existence in this way possess limits, have a purpose (*telos*), and accord with nature due to their generating principle. Therefore evil is engendered in souls as a secondary existence (*kata parhupostasin*), either through lack of symme-

try[1] or blending or in some other way. Aware of this, Plato said, " …in order that he be blameless for the subsequent evil." For "subsequent" reveals the adventitious, unnatural, and externally engendered existence of sinfulness.

1.20 [*In Remp.* I 27,9–15] In the theological sections, which he [Plato] has revealed in the second book of *Republic*, he first singles out that one among the gods who always seeks goodness and is responsible for their share in these things only—I mean all good things—but not in what opposes [good things], maintaining the principle that every god is good. For whenever he says that god is good, we must first of all understand that he means every god. [cf. I 96,1–13]

1.21 [*In Remp.* I 37,3 – 38,29] There is a problem regarding the first of the points that have been demonstrated by Plato: Whence evils? For if they come from God, then the argument that God is the cause of good things only is false. And if they come from another source, and that source comes from God, then much more is God the cause of evils. But if evils do not come from God, then there are more than one principle, one of good things and another of evil…

More has been said about these matters elsewhere, but, if it seems best, let us now as well speak briefly, first regarding the first problem, that evil comes neither from God nor any other cause that leads the procession into being. For it is not possible to introduce a form of evils or to say that matter is the cause of them. For all Forms are divine, intellective, and prior to essences or the most perfect properties in essences. And matter is brought about by God as necessary to the cosmos, and since it helps to bring completion to the generation of the All, it is not maleficent (*kakopoios*), nor, since it is the last of the wholes, is it something good, but it has a place in the order [that exists] among necessary things. For how could what exists for a purpose be such [i.e. evil]? We must therefore not assume that the cause of evils is either formal or material or in general one principle, but as he [*sc.* Plato] himself said, we must maintain that particular and dispersed entities provide for them [*sc.* evils] their secondary existence [*parhupostasis*]. Particular, because it [evil] is not one of the wholes, such as intellect, soul, or body, but many things, because it is not one. Therefore even

[1] Reading *asummetrian* for *summetrian*.

he himself says that we must look for certain other causes. For certainly if there is a body that shares in evil, there are various and different parts in it which, when they are in an asymmetrical relationship to each other, lead to the secondary existence [*parhuphistatai*] of illness, as each part wishes to dominate [the others]. And if soul [shares in evil], there are even in it various forms of life that are in a sense contraries through which, in their conflict with each other, some evil enters, since each [form] acts for itself. There also necessarily exists a body of this sort composed of elements in conflict, so that there might also be something perishable and the cosmos might be perfect, having come into existence from all the elements; and there was a mixture of souls, so that this world might not be deprived of rational beings, and, in turn, so that rational beings might not be implanted in bodies apart from a mean and [so] might not do and suffer what is appropriate to irrational beings, i.e. desire, perceive, and imagine… Evils, therefore, exist as a secondary consequence of the guiding activities of [real] beings and [exist] for no other reasons than for the Good; and the All uses their secondary existence for necessary ends and renders even these [evils] good by the power of the beings that utilize them. Hence there is also no pure evil, but it shares in a trace of good. And evil thus does not derive from God, since it is good in a manner, and moreover it comes into existence as something adventitious among the multitude of things from other particular and multiple causes.

1.22 [*In Remp.* I 98,2–25] Therefore these two [Pythagorean] series, both of goods and of evils that have occurred in the cosmos, fittingly derive from the demiurgic monad. Moreover, the divisions of the gods and of the kinds that follow upon the gods are dependent upon that absolutely first principle. And we must suppose the cause of the goods and evils that befall souls according to Fate and are allotted them according to justice during creation to be in him who brings order to the All and sends souls down into the mortal sphere. Moreover, the generation of Fate derives from the demiurgic Providence, and the chain of justice comes into existence because of that [Providence] and obeys its limits, being the upholder of divine law, the Athenian Stranger says (*Laws* 716a); and the forethought of those things that have been assigned according to justice, which fulfill chance, is determined according to the will of the Father. Thus the Demiurge and Father has prefigured in himself the cause of all goods and evils—both of the better and worse among what has been granted, and both of what is blessed and

of what is the opposite—of the external activity of the souls, and he guides all things according to intellect, apportioning to each thing what is fitting to it and raising all things to his paternal authority. Moreover, he apportions to souls what pertains both to the series of the better and to the series of the worse while looking to the Good and [doing it] for the sake of the fulfillment of what receive them. [Further discussion of this topic continues in the following sections.]

1.23 [*In Parm.* III, 829,23 – 831,24] …It remains for us to speak briefly about the "Form" of evils, that they too exist apart from divine paradigms, coming into being, as they do, through certain other causes, as we have said elsewhere. So should we speak of an Idea of evils as being evil itself, or should we say that, as the Form of things divisible is indivisible and that of plurality is monadic, so also the paradigm of evils is good? The former claim, by placing evil among those (paradigms), is in no sense pious, for we must not, by saying that there are paradigms of evils in God, be compelled to speak of him as the cause of these evils over which he set the paradigms, although we, whenever we look toward them, are made to be good. But if someone should say that the Form of evils is good, is it good in essence only or also in activity? For if only in essence, then it will be a producer of evil, something impious to speak. But if also in activity, then clearly what comes to be will also be good. For the actualization of a beneficent power and activity is no less good than the actualization of fire is hot. Therefore evil *qua* evil does not come to be in accordance with some paradigm. If, as even Parmenides himself will say, each Idea is a god, and no god is to be given responsibility for evils, as we have learned in *Republic* (379c), then we must not hold these Ideas responsible for evils, since they are gods. The paradigms are causes of those things of which they are paradigms. Thus no Idea is a paradigm of evils. Additionally, the Demiurge as well, the one who wishes that all things become like himself and that all things that are in the intelligible world come to be in the perceptible world, desires, to the extent that it is in his power, that there exist no evil. All these things he speaks of in *Timaeus* (29e). But if there were a paradigm of evils, he who wants all things to be made like himself would have brought evil into existence as something like himself. Yet surely he does not want evil to exist; (in so doing) he would be wishing that this very paradigm, one of the paradigms in him, not exist. And so the argument will not cease profaning the Father of the All until it rejects such an hypothesis and is willing to understand that the causes

and paradigms of evils are here somewhere (in this world), since it is also a principle of *Timaeus* (28a) that everything that comes to be in the likeness of an eternal model is beautiful. If, then, evil comes into existence in the likeness of some such model, it would not then be wholly ugly, but beautiful. And it is clear that all that is beautiful is good, so that evil would be good. And who would create evil while looking toward the paradigm? For the paradigm must exist if some creator is creating with respect to it. If it is Intellect, then he himself would be responsible for evils; but if the creator is one here (in this world) who knows the evils, then he would create them by knowing the paradigm. If neither of these is creator, then there would be no paradigm, since there is no creator at all (who creates) by looking toward it.

1.24 [*In Parm.* III, 832,24 – 833,19] Darkness is a privation of light, but the sun, being responsible for light, is not, then, itself responsible for the privation of light. So, then, Intellect as well, being responsible for knowledge, does not itself bring ignorance into existence as the privation of knowledge. And soul, being the supplier of life, does not itself give lifelessness. For in those things that receive the gifts of the primary beings the privations occur as by-products (*parhuphistantai*) of what is given, but do not pre-exist in things that confer states of being, so as to have their coming-to-be from there in the same way as the states of which they are the privations. If someone should say that Intellect, in knowing some good, knows evil also, and for this reason conceives evil to be in it (thus in *Phaedo* [97d] it is said that there is one knowledge of the better and the worse; so as well the Demiurge in *Timaeus* (41b) is made by Plato to say, "it belongs to evil to wish to undo what is in proper harmony and is in a good state;" for through this he shows that he knows evil), then we must say that there is no paradigm of evil in him, but his knowledge of evil is itself a paradigm of all knowledge of evil, which makes what comprehends it good. For certainly ignorance is evil, not the knowledge of ignorance, which is one (knowledge) both of itself and of ignorance; so that again the paradigm is not of evil, but of good, (that is,) the knowledge of evil. For if we speak this way, we shall not introduce Ideas of evils, as do some Platonists, nor shall we say that Intellect knows only what is better, as some suppose. Adopting an intermediate stance we shall grant that there is knowledge of evils themselves, but not that there is a paradigmatic cause of them, which is evil.

1.25 [*Th. Pl.* I 18, p. 83,12 – 86,25] For the same reason, then, that pertains to their existence the gods are purveyors of all good and nothing evil [This is a continuation of the discussion in 17, p. 81,4 – 82,6]. For what is primarily good and brings into existence from itself all that is good also is not cause of the portion that is its opposite, since as well what produces life is not the cause of of lifelessness, and what creates beauty is distinct both from the beautyless and shameful nature and from its causes… Of those things that have a share of the Good, some preserve their share undefiled and, having accepted their appropriate good in their pure folds, they keep the portion of goods that are proper to them safe from loss because of their abundance of power; while others, situated at the last levels of the wholes, truly themselves enjoy the goodness of the gods as far as their nature allows…, but "having received such an effluence" (*Phaedrus* 254 1b1–2), it is their nature not to keep the gift that has descended to them pure and unmixed, nor to maintain the permanence and sameness of their appropriate good, but becoming weak (*asthenê*), particular, material, and thoroughly filled with the lifelessness of the substrate, they produce disorder alongside (*parhuphistêsi*) order, irrationality alongside reason, and wickedness alongside and opposite virtue. Each of the wholes is beyond such perversion, since what is naturally more perfect in them is always in control. But the particular beings, which through the diminution of their power always depart from the wholes toward multiplicity, particularity, and division, obscure their share of the Good, while producing alongside it (*parhuphistêsi*) its opposite, which is dominated by its mixture and interlacing with the Good. For it is not permitted that here evil exist unmixed with or completely deprived of the Good, but if a certain thing is evil with respect to its particularity, it is completely good with respect to the whole and the All. For the All is always "blessed" (*Timaeus* 34b8) and is composed of parts that are perfect and always in accordance with nature. But that which is contrary to nature is always evil for particular beings, and shamefulness, asymmetry, perversion, and secondary existence (*parhupostasis*) are their attributes. Indeed, what is corruptible is with regard to itself corrupted and abandons its proper perfection, but with regard to the All it is incorruptible and indestructible. And all of what is deprived of the Good, insofar as it is in itself, is also deprived of its proper existence because of the weakness of its nature, but with regard to the Totality, insofar as it is also part of the All, it is good…

[85,6] Hence the divine principle, as has been said, ⟨is the cause of all⟩ good things, while the secondary existence (*parhupostasis*) of evils does not exist through potency, but through the weakness (*astheneias*) of those beings who receive the illuminations from the gods, nor [do evils exist] among the wholes, but among particular beings, and not in all of the latter. For, indeed, of particular beings the first and intellective classes everlastingly possess attributes of the Good, while the intermediate classes whose actions are temporal, because they interweave their participation in the Good with temporal change and movement, are unable to keep their gift from the gods unchanged, unitary, and simple; rather, they obscure its simplicity with their own diversity, its unity with their multiplicity, and its purity with their admixture. For they could not come into existence out of the first, pure classes, nor did they possess an essence that is simple or powers that are unitary, but they were formed from "contraries," as Socrates says in *Phaedrus* (246b3). The final, material classes certainly to a much greater extent pervert their proper good. For they are bound up with lifelessness and have an existence that is phantasmal, being largely steeped in not-being; and they come into existence from opposing principles, and do not stop changing and constantly scattering from contact with things around them, making clear in every way that they have given themselves over to corruption, [86] "asymmetry, shamefulness" (*Gorgias* 525a5), and all sorts of alterations, not giving in to evil in their actions alone, as I think is the case for the classes before them, but also in their powers and essences being steeped in what opposes nature and in the weakness that derives from matter (*tês hulikês astheneias*). For what come to be in an alien place, if they bring the whole together with particular form, control their substrate nature; but, in turn, if they abandon their proper wholeness [and move] toward particularity, participating now in particularity, weakness, war, and the division that causes becoming, they necessarily change in every way.

It is therefore not the case that each being is completely good (for there would then be no corruption and genesis of bodies, nor purification and punishment of souls). Nor is there evil among whole beings (for the cosmos would not then be a "blessed god" (*Timaeus* 34b8), if the most essential components from which it comes into existence are imperfect). Nor are the gods the causes of evils, as indeed they are of good things, but [the causes are] the weakness (*astheneia*) of the beings that receive the Good and their existence among the last beings. Nor is the evil that has a secondary existence among particular beings in any way unmixed with the Good, but even this in a certain manner shares

[in the Good] and is embraced by participation in the Good. Nor in general is it possible that there exist an evil that is completely deprived of all good, for absolute evil (*to autokakon*) would transcend even absolute not-being, just as, in fact, absolute Good transcends perfect being. Nor is the evil that belongs to particular beings left to disorder (*atakton*), but even this is given proper direction by the gods, and for these reasons justice purifies the wickedness in souls, while another order of gods purifies the wickedness in bodies…

1.26 [*De dec. dub.* c. 26, p. 44 (104)] After this let us consider a fifth point, if it seems proper—for this has troubled the thoughts of many people—, why at all, if Providence exists, does evil have a place among beings? This dilemma has convinced many, if they accept [the existence of] evil as self-evident, to deny the presence Providence in all things, or, if they agree that Providence governs all things, to eliminate evil and claim that all things are solely good, even if some want to call evil those goods that are farthest removed from the first principles. For what is less good is in no way an evil.

1.27 [*De dec. dub.* c. 27, p. 44 (104)] If, then, we also shall agree to these arguments, we no longer need to seek what we had proposed to investigate. For there will be no evil that will trouble Providence, just as we said. But if we say that anything at all is evil, then we should explain its source. For it would be absurd if [we say that] it derives from Providence, which is the source of all that is good. And if [we say that] it derives from another cause, and if that cause is among those things that derive from Providence, then the argument risks taking the cause back to it [*sc.* Providence]. For the effects of things that derive from it also derive from it. If, on the other hand, [evil] arises from a cause that is not entirely in harmony with [Providence], then we shall produce two first principles, one of good things and the other of evil. Nor, in addition, shall we preserve the quietude of Providence, since it will have a contrary.

Admitting, then, that evil exists, let us look at how it exists without threatening the sovereignty of Providence. And first—since this [*sc.* evil] is twofold, that is, what is contrary to nature in bodies and what is contrary to reason in souls, and it is neither in all bodies nor in all souls—let us consider how what is contrary to nature exists in bodies in accordance with the reason of Providence…

Analysis

If there is an overarching unity of purpose to be found in Proclus' various accounts on evil, it is that they are all part of his efforts to defend a strongly monistic doctrine of creation against well-known dualistic doctrines of certain schools of philosophy and theology. Such doctrines either postulated an absolute principle of evil in opposition to the Good or attempted to implicate God in the generation of evil. In formulating his own doctrine against these views, Proclus is following the lead of his Neoplatonic predecessors, including Plotinus, despite his dualistic tendencies.[2] The Neoplatonists were very likely reacting chiefly to the movement in Middle Platonism to interpret the accounts of creation in Plato and Pythagoreanism in a dualistic manner. The most prominent of these Platonists were Plutarch, Atticus, and Numenius.[3] Each had praised Plato for alone realizing that there cannot be only two first principles of creation, a creator God and a passive matter, for then God would be the cause of evil.[4] In their interpretations of

[2] On Proclus' theory, see Schröder (1916), 195ff., Hager (1962), 94ff.; Isaac (1977–1982), 7 and 16; Steel (1998), 83; Opsomer and Steel (1999[1]), *passim*. For his predecessors, see Hager (1987), 61ff. and Alt (1993), *passim*. Like all Platonists, Plotinus absolves the divine world from blame for evil; cf. II.3, especially .11 and .16.36ff., and O'Meara (1999), 92 on I.8.6. On the dualistic tendencies in Plotinus and Proclus' reaction to them, see also Narbonne (1994), Appendix; Bezancon (1965), 136f.; Blumenthal (1981), 220 and (2000), 167ff.; Hager (1962), 93ff.

[3] Cf. Schröder (1916), 53ff.; Froidefond (1987), 215; Theiler (1955), 85ff.; Puech (1981); Hager (1987), 97ff.; Frede (1987), 1051f.; Ferrari (1995), 74ff.; Dillon (1997), 29; Opsomer and Steel (1999[2]), 235ff. For an attempt at a more "monistic" analysis of Plutarch, cf. Thévenaz (1938), 119f. Mansfeld (1992), p. 298, notes that there were efforts among Platonists to attribute a dualistic doctrine to Pythagoreans and Plato before Plutarch. This linking of Pythagoras to Plato in the tradition of dualism may explain why on several occasions Proclus takes pains to show the unanimity of Pythagoras and Plato in their monism. Cf. also Dörrie (1976), 202ff., on Platonist attempts to deal with the dualistic elements in their systems.

See Den Boeft (1970), 86f. on the recognition of three first principles, God, matter, and the Ideas, Ideas being the "weakest" of three, so investing matter with opposing power. Even for the Neoplatonists, as we shall see, matter is not fully divested of its "power" to oppose the Good, although it is hardly emphasized. And we find, especially among the later Neoplatonists, a return to the idea of the causal significance of the Ideas through their attribution to the Paradigm of an increased role in creation.

[4] Plutarch's critique is in particular, but not necessarily exclusively, directed against the Stoics. Numenius' doctrine is also anti-Stoic, although he seems also to have objected to the systems of other Platonists as well as of certain fellow Pythagoreans. If it is true that in general Atticus' exegesis of Plato's creation account is part of his anti-Aristotelian polemic, then perhaps so is his embrace of Plutarch's evil World Soul. To a certain extent as well these Platonists were responding to other doctrines that

the dialogues, Plato had recognized a third *arkhê*, co-eternal with and independent of God, which is an evil pre-cosmic soul. This World Soul is antecedent to and constituent of the rational World Soul of the *Timaeus* in the case of Plutarch and Atticus, while for Numenius it is the soul of matter. The Neoplatonists regard these theories with an attitude approaching disbelief; it is inconceivable to them both that there could be a soul that is not the creation of higher divine beings and that there could be a soul that is evil *per se*. Their responses are varied, Plotinus positing a soulless matter as absolute evil and the later Neoplatonists granting to evil only a qualified existence. But in almost all cases the determinant principles were that, although it is to be allowed that evil exists, (a) it is (even in its pre-cosmic state) generated and (b) its generation is part of the providential activity of the Demiurge and, ultimately, of even higher principles.

In his commentary on Plato's *Republic* Proclus discusses Plato's analysis of the central question, Whence evils (*pothen ta kaka*)?[5] If they derive from God, then the argument that God is the cause of good alone is false. If, on the other hand, evils have a different source, and if that source is itself a creation of God, then so much the more is God the cause of evils. But if God is neither directly nor indirectly involved in the generation of evils, and evils do exist in some form, then there are two first principles, one of what is good and the other of what is evil. Plato's solution to this *aporia* is that evils originate neither out of God nor out of any other antecedent cause, since there can be no Form of evils—all Forms are divine and intellective—nor can matter be the cause—matter is provided to the cosmos by God as necessary for its coming-to-be, and is therefore neither good nor evil.[6] There being no formal or material cause for evils, we must look elsewhere for the explanation for their existence.[7] In the first place, Plato contends, we should not seek one *arkhê* of evils, but acknowledge both that they emerge from partial and disparate sources and that, therefore, they themselves have only a partial or secondary existence, a *parhupostasis*.[8] In the case of

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expressly asserted that there is evil in the divine world. See the comments to Dodds (1957), 53ff. and Saffrey and Westerink (1968), 154.

[5] *In Remp* I 37,3 – 38,29 [1.21].

[6] For a discussion of the consideration of this problem in Middle Platonism, specifically by Apuleius, see Barra (1981).

[7] On Proclus' treatment of causality in his doctrine of evil, see Opsomer and Steel (1999^2), 244ff.

[8] This aspect of his theory is drawn from Iamblichus, although it is commonly

evils that are proper to the body, they arise when its various properties are not in symmetrical relationship with each other and each strives to dominate the others, the result being the *parhupostasis* of illness (*nosos*). Evils originate in the soul in a similar way, the disparate and opposite forms of life in it—the rational and irrational souls—competing with each other, each concerned solely with its own function. Yet such corporeal and psychic evils are necessary for the completeness of the cosmic system. Thus, while it is true that from one perspective they have multiple causes, they are ultimately dependent on nothing other than the Good which provides them with their partial or secondary existence. Evils are, then, from this universal point of view really made to be good, which means, of course, that there is no "unmixed" or absolute evil, but all evils share in a "trace" of the Good. So evils do in fact have their origin in God, but only *qua* good; as evils, their sources are, taken together, multiple and, taken individually, partial causes; that is, none of them is a "whole" or unitary *arkhê* conceived as efficient, formal, and final cause, so that what they produce can only be themselves partial entities with no natural *telos*. In this way Proclus can argue that evils in one sense do originate in the divine world and in another do not.

Elsewhere Proclus adds that, because there can be no divine cause of evils *qua* evils, we should disregard any theory of evil that posits an

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noted that Porphyry is the first to use the term *parhupostasis*, although not in the context of the existence of evil; cf. *De myst.* IV 7, 190. On the history of the use of this term and Proclus' application of it, see Hager, (1962), 93 (on Porphryry) and 94ff.; Isaac (1977–1982), 13ff.; Beierwaltes (1962), 71f.; Saffrey and Westerink (1968), 152; Theiler (1966), 176; Steel (1998), 97f.; Opsomer and Steel (1999^2), 249f. On the argument for multiple causes of evil, cf. Opsomer and Steel (1999), 242, n. 77 (where they note that the same idea turns up in Stoicism; cf. Origen, *Cels.* 4. 64 = SVF 2.1174) and 244ff. The term is rendered variously; cf., for example Blumenthal's ([2000], 168) translation, "an excresence of being," with that of Opsomer and Steel ([1999^1], *passim* and [1999^2], 248ff.), "a parasitic existence" (the latter apparently under the influence of Lloyd). Most interesting are Steel's (1998) remarks that "The term signifies 'to exist together with, to exist coordinately with another entity,' like time coexists with motion, and a concept with the imagination." However, its "general meaning" is something that is "attached to or depends upon another existence, something that has not existence on its own account, but must lean upon or reside in something else" (97f.). He thus opposes the common translation "pseudo-existence" (98). He and Opsomer regard Isaac's translation "une contre-existence" as showing "…a complete misunderstanding of the philosophical purport of the concept" ([1999^2], 249, n. 106). In these sentiments they are in agreement with Lloyd (1987), who prefers either I. Hadot's "existence adventice," which combines "…the notions of incidental and from outside" (157), or "parasitic existence."

evil cosmic Soul or any other evil-producing cause among the gods, for these are ideas that are foreign to the teaching of Plato and tantamount to barbaric *mythos*.[9] The targets of his vitriol here are the proponents of theological dualism in all of its ancient forms: the Gnostics and the Manichees,[10] as well as the dualistic Platonists Plutarch, Atticus, and Numenius. As Proclus understands him, Plato is a strict monist, granting to evil a sort of existence but at the same time bringing it entirely under the providential governance of God. As such evil certainly adversely affects both the bodies and souls in which it exists, but under no circumstances do its effects thwart the divine purpose.

Although Proclus refers to all forms of evil as constituting a type of privation of the Good or as a type of weakness (*astheneia*), he draws a sharp distinction between the ways in which evil manifests itself in bodies and souls, respectively.[11] Not surprisingly, he is more concerned with evils proper to the soul, and it is in his discussion of the soul's responsibility for its own sinfulness that we see perhaps most clearly allusions to the thought of Plotinus. A well-known passage in his commentary on *Timaeus* shows what is at the heart of his disagreement with Plotinus on this matter.[12] Both Plotinus and Theodorus, he argues, want to preserve in us something that is impassible and always engaged in contemplation of the divine. We recognize this as a reference to the idea, so important to Plotinus' psychology, that there is part of the human soul that remains undescended and constantly in touch with the intelligible world. As we know from the *Enneads*, this part of the soul, which is not affected at all by the lower soul's contact with the body, is the one element of the "compound being" over which matter, Plotinus' principle of evil, has no influence. The *Timaeus* text on which Proclus is commenting (43cd), he objects, demonstrates that Plato acknowledged nothing like this in the soul. So he agrees with the "divine" Iamblichus in wondering what we are to understand as human sinfulness within such a psychological framework. When the irrational soul succumbs to the temptations of the body, is this not the work of free choice (*prohairêsis*)? And if it is the *prohairêsis* that sins, how can the soul itself be sinless? The sinfulness of the soul is, then, always a matter of free choice for

[9] *Th. Pl.* I 18, 87,22 – 88,10.

[10] Cf. the notes of Saffrey and Westerink to *Th. Pl.* I 18, 154.

[11] This was a common distinction. We find the same thing, for example, in Maximus of Tyre, who held that material evil derives from matter and ethical evil from the soul. Cf. Hager (1962), 84f. For Proclus, see also *Th. Pl.* I 18, 86 [cf. 1.25].

[12] *In Tim.* III 333,28 – 334,27.

which it is entirely responsible; indeed, even when we suffer harm from others we are to blame for our decisions to associate with such people.[13]

The key texts for Proclus' view of psychic evil are *Timaeus* 42d ff., *Phaedrus* 248a ff., and *Republic* 617de, where he finds Plato saying that the "weakness" of soul's *prohairêsis* manifests itself initially before its first descent into bodies and is in fact the cause of that descent. Proclus has a twofold motive for interpreting Plato in this way: to absolve the divine world, particularly the Demiurge, from responsibility for soul's sin and to reject the Plotinian claim that soul abandons the divine realm due at least in part to the "seduction" of matter. In *Timaeus* we are told that the Demiurge legislates all things to souls before their descent so that he might be blameless for the evil that they do in this world.[14] And the myth in Book Ten of *Republic* confirms that it is the souls themselves, and not the gods, who make the choices of lives. The myth of *Phaedrus*, on the other hand, shows most vividly that soul's weakness is inherent to it, and that, just as its descent is not at all the result of some force exerted upon it from above, so there is no attraction pulling it down from below (cf. *DMS* cc. 33 and 49). Proclus does not play down the deleterious effects of the soul's subsequent contact with matter, nor does he deny that matter plays a role in soul's sinful actions. What he does reject is the notion that matter is the primary cause of sinfulness itself. For those who, like Proclus and Iamblichus, maintain that there is no part of the soul that remains undescended, to argue otherwise is in effect to destroy soul's autonomy, and Proclus clearly implies in *DMS* that he is fully aware of this danger (cf. c. 33). But his chief focus throughout his surviving work is on the metaphysical aspects of the problem of evil, upon determining the true source or sources of evil in light of both Plato's dialogues and the various theories of his predecessors who themselves were exegetes of the dialogues.

In his own commentaries on the dialogues Proclus returns again and again to the related assertions that in the generation of evil God, i.e. the Demiurge, is "blameless" (*anaitios*) and that he necessarily wills only what is good.[15] It is through the Demiurge's creative act that the Good makes all things that are generated like itself to the degree that each is

[13] Cf. *In Tim.* III 313,13 – 314,22. Proclus' strongly deontological tendencies are most evident at *De prov.* c. 36.

[14] *In Remp.* I 101,1–13 and *In Tim.* III 302,27 – 303,32 [1.19].

[15] In addition to the passages cited in the notes above, cf. *In Tim.* I 365,6 – 366,8; 367,20 – 368,11; 372,19 – 374,3; 373,22 – 381,21 [1.17]; *In Parm.* III 835, 16 ff.

capable. Moreover, to say that there is no divine cause of evil is to say that there is no form of evil, since, as Plato's Parmenides says (*Parmenides* 134c), every idea is a god. And if there is no form of evil, then evil also has no paradigm.[16] But both of these claims pose difficulties. In the first place, in saying that neither God nor matter is the source of evil, we must avoid the conclusion—and the Stoic dilemma—that it therefore has no cause. For what is without a cause is entirely without order and limit, and to say that the cosmos contains disorder and limitlessness in effect trivializes God's creation.[17] Proclus acknowledges that some commentators, although accepting that the Demiurge is not the immediate cause of evil insofar as its origin is in the physical world, may still hold him responsible to the extent that he is the creator of the cosmos.[18] What they fail to realize, he replies, is that by holding this position they at the same time take away the very possibility of cosmic creation and confuse the nature of the first principles with that of the last. If there is to be a genesis, then there must also be degeneration, and to what exists in accordance with nature there is necessarily opposed that which is contrary to nature. To the objection that the Form of evil is conceivable if we assume that such a Form is good in the same way that the Form of divisible is indivisible and the Form of plurality is monadic, Proclus responds that, if so, then it is good either in its essence alone or in its causal functions as well. If in essence only, then the Paradigm produces evil, which is an "impious" claim. If in its causal functions as well, then, because it is a god and therefore necessarily beneficent, what it creates will be good rather than evil.[19] So both of Plato's divine agents of cosmic creation in *Timaeus*, the Demiurge and the Paradigm, are free of involvement in the coming-to-be of evil.[20]

There are also several objections to be confronted in consideration of the assertion that God, being good, must be completely benevolent. If we accept either that he does not will that evil exist or the much

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[16] Cf. *In Parm.* III 829,23 – 831,24 [1.23] and 832–833 [1.24]; *Th. Pl* I 18, 87f.; *DMS* cc. 43–44 [cf. 1.8]. The only Platonist known to have maintained that there is a Form of evil is Amelius. Cf. Asclepius, *In Nic. Ar.* P. 44,3–5, p. 32 Tarán and the notes of Dillon (1987), p. 189, n. 33 and Saffrey and Westerink (1968), 153.

[17] *In Tim.* III 303,8–12 [1.19].

[18] *In Tim.* I 375,6–11 [1.17].

[19] *In Parm.* III 829,23 – 831,24 [1.23].

[20] *In Remp.* I 27,9 – 33,7 [cf. 1.20]. This is the argument that Proclus consistently presents, but, as we shall see, he has a problem in maintaining the complete "innocence" of the Paradigm of which he was probably not unaware.

stronger claim that he wills that evil not exist, then how can there be evil at all? If evil does nonetheless exist, then its existence comes despite the fact that the "Father of all things" does not will it or, even worse, despite the fact that he specifically wills against its existence.[21] But certainly God never wills in vain.[22] Furthermore, as Proclus insists at *DMS* c. 3 [1.2], God does positively will that evil not exist, which is to say that he wills the not-being of evil. Yet, again, evil does, and must, exist and unless the Demiurge is responsible for the existence of only some things and not others, he must be its creator, and its creation must have been the fruition of his will. So the simple claim that the Demiurge does not will the existence of evil does not always suffice for Proclus. There is a more complex answer that better captures the relationship between the divine world and cosmic evil: God both wills and does not will the existence of evil.[23] He wills its existence to the extent that he is the source of the being of all things; he does not will its existence to the extent that he makes all things good. We are thus to regard evil both *qua* evil and *qua* good and realize that its parhupostatic existence is subsumed under the higher being that derives from the Good. To put it another way, evil conceived in and of itself originates in the partial soul (or, we might add, the partial body), but comes only accidentally (*kata sumbebêkos*) from God, since God created the soul. But *qua* good, its true source is God, and only accidentally the partial soul. What God wills is good, and the object of his will does, as it must, come to pass. What is evil in this good creation becomes so through other, lower, and partial causes which give it an incomplete existence. Pressed to explain precisely how evil can be at the same time good, *inter alia* Proclus would point to Plato's principle that evil is necessary for the perfection of the created world, and so, although itself having no natural *telos*, it serves a higher purpose.

It is appropriate here to qualify somewhat the point made earlier that there is no discernible development of Proclus' doctrine in his extant works. While this assertion is on the whole true, it is by no means the case that in composing *DMS* he was simply transcribing features of his earlier treatments of the subject. This will become clear when we again compare this treatise with *In Timaeum* I 365–388 [cf. 1.17] (see Appendix I). As closely aligned as these analyses are in their

[21] *In Tim.* I 373,28 – 374,2 [1.17].
[22] *In Tim.* I 381,16.
[23] *In Tim.* I 379,26 – 380,7 [1.18].

treatments of evil there are, as we perhaps should expect, certain subtle but noteworthy shifts in emphasis in the later work. A good point of contrast emerges when we compare Proclus' account of the nature of evil there with the short summary of his theory that he provides in the *Timaeus* commentary (380,24 – 381,21). In the latter summary he considers facets of his theory that are essential to both accounts: there is no evil in the divine world, nor in "whole" souls or in "whole" bodies; the evil that does exist in souls and bodies affects their activities only, and not their essences or powers; evil exists as a *parhupostasis* and is ultimately dependent upon the Good; all things are good through the will of God; evil is necessary for the perfection of creation. He describes its specific manifestation in souls and bodies as follows:

> As for the evil in souls, it does not exist in rational souls; for they all strive for the Good. Nor does it exist in irrational souls; for they act in accordance with their nature. Rather, it exists in the asymmetry (*asummetria*) [of their relationship] to each other. As for the evil in bodies, it does not exist in their form; for form desires to dominate matter. Nor does it exist in this [*sc*. matter]; for matter wants to be brought to order. Rather, it exists in the asymmetry [of the relationship] of form to matter (380,31 – 381,6).

That evil does not originate in any of the constituent parts of souls or bodies, but rather in the disharmony of the relationship of these parts to each other, for Proclus defines its parhupostatic existence. The implication in this statement is that if evil did have its source in any of these elements, each of which has a determinative cause or *arkhê*, then evil itself would have an *arkhê* and so would exist in the primary sense of that term. Viewed from another perspective, evil occurs when the soul or body acts or suffers from effects in a way that opposes its nature. Thus even the irrational soul, when it gives heed to deleterious desires, does not thereby commit a sin, since its response to them is natural to it. Sin does occur when the irrational soul gives in to such desires, but only to the extent that in doing so it subverts its natural relationship with the rational soul, which is one of dominance of the latter over the former.[24] While nothing in this summary substantially conflicts with the description of the nature of evil in *DMS*—in both cases evil is described as, in essence, a lack of rational order—, there is no mention

[24] This is closely related to the idea, common among the Neoplatonists, that matter is evil for the soul only because, when the soul turns its attention to it, it does so despite the fact that its natural object of contemplation is the divine Intellect. Cf. Hadot (1968), 343, n. 2.

in the latter of evils as types of asymmetry; rather, Proclus opts for more forceful language: evil is privation, impotence, deficiency, and the contrary of the Good, although it is none of these in an absolute sense. Evil is thus defined as primarily those aspects of souls and bodies that oppose the Good without in any way challenging its supreme power. If we were to speculate concerning the reasons for this shift in language and emphasis, we might well point to the possible influence on *DMS* of his commentary on Plotinus' *Enneads*, where Proclus very likely vigorously opposed Plotinus' treatment of evil as privation and contrary to the Good in I.8.

Along with this distinction in language we can also detect in the late treatise more generally a lesser interest in the role of theodicy in the problem of evil. While its early chapters are occupied with arguments to show that the divine realms are free of evil, Proclus somewhat quickly moves to discussions of how and in what beings evil does exist. The question of the roles of the Demiurge and Paradigm in the generation of evil is not here a matter of great importance for Proclus, and the problem of the compatibility of Providence with the existence of evil is given only a relatively cursory glance at the end of the treatise. The obvious reason for this is that he devoted two other monographs, *De decem dubitationibus* and *De providentia*, to his doctrine of Providence. Proclus' primary purpose in the treatise on evil is, then, to present a distinctly 'logical' analysis of evil, in pursuit of which he lays out, although by no means in a uniformly orderly way, a quite detailed categorization of the different forms or instantiations of evil. The schematization of evil reaches its apex in his treatment of the aspects of the soul and the body which evil affects (Appendix II).[25] Proclus arrives at several important conclusions from this schema: (1) the evil of the soul is greater than that of the body, (2) evil is, in all of its instantiations, privation or deficiency; there is no absolute evil, and (3) there are evils that arise from within the soul and for which it is therefore responsible. His schema is reminiscent of Plotinus' analysis of the different "forms" of evil in *Enneads* I.8; there, however, Plotinus argues that baseness (*aiskhos*) and illness (*nosos*) are, along with poverty (*penia*), exclusively evils that are external to the soul (*ta exô psukhês*: I.8.5.15–36).[26] Illness is "deficiency and excess of material bodies that

[25] On the style of composition of the treatise on evil, cf. Opsomer and Steel (1999[1]), 3f.

[26] Cf. Hager's (1962), 90f., discussion of this passage.

do not maintain order and measure," while baseness is "matter that is not dominated by form." Plotinus sees this as a reference solely to the effects of matter which themselves have nothing to do with the internal state of the soul. Proclus, on the other hand, finds a more complex categorization that includes both the body and the soul. Illness and baseness, then, are conditions both of the material body and of the immaterial soul, which in the latter case may originate from within the soul itself. Here, as elsewhere, Plato stresses, among other things, that soul's moral autonomy is complete, although, insofar as no evil is absolute, there is no possibility of a soul that is essentially evil.

Before we proceed with analyses of the competing interpretations of the concepts that were thought by ancient Platonists to be at the heart of Plato's 'doctrine' of evil, a word of caution is necessary. While we may be certain that Plotinus is one of the very few individual thinkers to whose theories Proclus is directly responding in his treatise on evil, we must avoid the conclusion that the treatise is primarily devoted to a refutation of Plotinian evil.[27] Clearly the *Enneads* loom large in his mind in his long discussion of matter, but even there Plotinus' is not necessarily the only theory that occupies Proclus. Nor does the fact that Proclus adduces many of the same passages as Plotinus of itself signify much; such passages were common resources throughout the Platonist tradition. And when at various times Proclus turns his attention to refuting the theories of unnamed groups of thinkers, it is significant that without exception Plotinus is not included among them. Rather, Proclus' doctrine of evil is shaped by his reaction to the entire tradition of Platonist treatments of the subject, most immediately and intensively those of his teacher Syrianus and of Iamblichus, but also the accounts of earlier Platonists that were read and discussed in his school. This tradition was, in turn, developed in part in response to the competing theories of various rival schools, particularly the Peripatetics and the Stoics. The nature of this tradition, and the different vectors of influence that characterize it, are what I hope that the following chapters will bring to light.

[27] See, for example, Opsomer and Steel (1999[1]), 4 and 15. Proclus himself makes clear (*DMS* c. 8) that he is willing and eager to consider a variety of competing doctrines, if only to refute them. In his monograph Proclus does not name those of his predecessors to whom he is responding, as he does, for example, in his earlier commentary on *Timaeus*. See Dillon (1987), xxxv f.

Appendix I

Themes in *DMS*	Appearance in *In Timaeum*
God creates only what is good	365,6 – 366,2; 375,6–11
God wills only what is good	367,20 – 368,11; 372,19 – 374,3; 374,27 – 375,5; 379,26 – 380,1
God imposes order on disorder in his eternal creation	366,13–27
Confrontation with dualistic theories: the evil cosmic soul, the disorderly motion, and the irrational nature	381,26 – 396,26
There is no absolute evil; all things participate to some degree in the first cause	366,2–13; 372,19 – 373,21; 374,14–26; 378,21–26
Evil is a *parhupostasis*	374,4–14; 375,9–18 and 20 – 376,19; 380,2–8
Evil is necessary for the perfection of the cosmos	376,5–15
Distinction between evil in bodies and evil in souls	381,3–5
Matter is not the source of evil	385,28 – 388,20
Evil and the free will of the soul; soul's responsibility for its sinfulness	376,20 – 378,22
Divine Providence is compatible with the existence of evil	373,22 – 375,5

Appendix II
Schema of the Forms of Evil in DMS [cf. 1.12–15]

I. The "measures of beings" are contained in three principles (c. 57):

(a) nature
(b) soul
(c) intellect

The evil in each of these principles is the lack of measure, or the privation of their forming principles.

II. The good of each level of being is in accordance with the level of being directly above it (c. 55). Therefore:

(a) the good of the "superior" (i.e. rational) soul is in accordance with intellect (= I [c] above)
(b) the good of the irrational soul is in accordance with reason (= the rational soul: I [b] above)
(c) the good of the body is in accordance with nature (= I [a] above)

III. Evil in each of these levels of being opposes the good of that level. Therefore, insofar as there are three measures of beings, each of which defines the good of the levels of being below them, there are three "subjects" in which the evil that opposes this good resides (c. 55):

(a) in the particular soul, or reason (in opposition to intellect)
(b) in the "image of soul" (= the irrational soul or irrational form of life) (in opposition to reason)
(c) in the individual body (in opposition to nature)

IV. In each of these three subjects there are two sorts of evil (c. 56):

(a) baseness (*turpitudo* = *aiskhos*)
(b) illness (*egritudo* = *nosos*)

V. In the body, these two sorts of evil are defined as follows (cc. 56 and 60):

(a) baseness: weakness and defect of form
(b) illness: dissolution of corporeal order and symmetry

VI. In the soul, these two sorts of evil are defined as follows (c. 56):

(a) baseness: ignorance and privation of intelligence
(b) illness: dissension and deficiency of the life according to reason, involving the impulses

VII. The two sorts of evil in the soul manifest themselves in the two levels of soul as follows (c. 56):

(a) the particular soul
    (1) baseness: deficiency in reason or science
    (2) illness: deficiency in knowledge, whereby the imagination is an impediment to the contemplative life
(b) the image of soul
    (1) baseness: deficiency in the skill (*ars* = *tekhnê* = *doxa*) needed to attain knowledge
    (2) illness: dissension of the impulses in the life of action

VIII. The manifestations of evil in the two levels of soul correspond to the two kinds of evil in the soul (c. 58):

(a) evil that is internal and part of the soul itself: "improper imagination, consenting to evils, or choices that are in some way base"
(b) evil that is external and in different actions: committed through anger or desire

IX. More generally, there are three kinds of evil in the soul (c. 39):

(a) evil affecting soul's essence (*substantia* = *ousia*)
(b) evil affecting soul's power (*potentia* = *dunamis*)
(c) evil affecting soul's activity (*operationis* = *energeia*)

CHAPTER TWO

EVIL AS PRIVATION

Texts

2.1 [*DMS* c. 2, p. 174,23–32] …But if, as we say, the Good is above being and the source of being, since all things, in whatever way they exist and are generated, seek the Good by nature, how is evil in any sense to be one of the things that exist, if it is excluded from such striving? It is hardly enough, then, to say that evil exists because there must be something that is entirely a sub-contrary to the Good; for how can what is entirely sub-contrary seek at all its contrary nature? But it is impossible that there be any existing thing that does not seek the Good. For all things are created and exist because of that desire and are preserved through it. Hence, if evil is sub-contrary to the Good, evil is not to be included among existing things.

2.2 [*DMS* c. 3, p. 176,1–11] Why should we say more? If the One and what we call the nature of the Good is beyond being, then evil is beyond not-being—I mean not-being in the absolute sense, for the Good is better than being in the absolute sense. One of two things is true. ⟨Not-being is either absolutely-not-being or what is beyond being. But it is impossible that evil is beyond super-essential not-being, which is the good.⟩ [Opsomer and Steel emendation] If not-being is absolutely not-being, then to a much greater extent is evil not-being, since it is even weaker than absolute not-being, as the account has it; for evil is more distant from good than not-being. This is the meaning of those who prefer not-being to evil-being. Yet what is further from good is more non-existent than what is nearer to it; so absolute not-being itself has a greater degree of being than what is called evil: evil is not, then, to a much greater degree than absolute not-being…

2.3 [*DMS* c. 5, pp. 178,1 – 180,29] And not for this reason only, but also because evil is the corrupting principle of each thing. This is the evil that Socrates revealed in *Republic* when he made the appropriate

comment that, because the good of each thing is what preserves it, for this reason all things have a desire for the Good. Since for all things existence and self-preservation come from it, while on the other hand not-being and corruption are due to the nature of evil. It is necessary, then, either that evil exists or that nothing should be corruptive of anything else; but in the latter case "generation will break down and cease" [*Phaedrus* 245e1]. For if there are no corruptive entities, corruption is impossible; but if there is no corruption, then there is no generation, since all generation takes place through the corruption of another thing. And if there is no generation, then the whole world at the same time will be imperfect. "For it will not possess in itself the mortal kinds of animals; but it should possess them if it is going to be sufficiently perfect," says Timaeus [*Timaeus* 41b7–c2]. If, then, the world is to be a "blessed god," it should perfectly preserve its likeness to the wholly perfect animal; if this is the case, then the mortal kinds should also complete the All; if this is the case, then there should be both generation and corruption; but if this is the case, then there should be certain things that are either corruptive or generative of certain other things. For neither generation nor corruption occurs to all things through the same causes. And if there are corruptive principles which, because inherent in those things which take part in genesis, destroy their power, then evil must also exist… So the same reasoning will preserve the entire world for us as perfect and will place evil among existing things. Thus not only will evil exist because of the Good, but also it will be good by the very fact of its existence…

2.4 [*DMS* c. 6, p. 182,29–35] So Socrates, in *Theaetetus*, emphatically affirms that evils do not perish and that their existence is neither superfluous nor, so to speak, by chance. For it is a necessary and good thing. And he says that evil is "necessary," and therefore evil is a good. And if evil is a good, then it exists, in his own terms, not only in the sense that it was so generated as not to perish and is thus included among existing things, but also in the sense that its principle is in accordance with what is good, that is, its passage into being.

2.5 [*DMS* c. 7, pp. 184,28 – 186,42] But this privation, incapable of existing in and of itself nor completely absolved from that nature of which it is the privation, becoming in a certain sense empowered by that nature, because of its implication with it is situated in the order of those things that are opposite to the Good. For other privations are

only absences of states, taking nothing from their own natures for their existence; but the Good, due to the excellence of its power, empowers even the privation of itself. For, as in all things the Good engendered the first power, so too in each thing the particular good generates its own power. By its connection to this power, as we said, the privation of the Good, by strengthening its own impermanence through the power of the Good, becomes opposite to the Good, strengthened by its mixture with it and assuming the power to combat that which is near. But this privation is not the same as other privations; for the latter exist in the absence of all states, while the former do not at all exist in the absence of the Good.

2.6 [*DMS* c. 8, p. 188,19–28] And the not-being is either that which in no way exists and is beyond even the last nature that exists by accident, being capable of existing neither through itself nor by accident. For that which in no way exists does not exist in one sense and not exist in another. Or [the not-being] is the not-being that associates with being, and it is right to call it either the privation of being or "otherness." And the first is in every sense not-being, while the other which is in a realm above is "no less [existent] than being," as the Eleatic Stranger says. Existing among those things that are intermittently being and not-being, it is weaker than being, but in a certain manner it is governed by being itself.

2.7 [*DMS* c. 9, p. 188,1–18] Thus if anyone should inquire as to whether not-being exists or not, we would say, in the first case, that insofar as it is in every sense not-being, in no way participating in being, it is completely not-being. But in the second case let us admit to him who asks that insofar as it is only in a certain manner not-being we can count it among existing things. The same applies to evil—since it also has two aspects, being in one respect purely evil, while in the other not without mixture with the Good. We shall place the first aspect beyond what is completely not-being by as much as the Good is beyond being, while we shall categorize the second among existing things. For, due to the mediation of the Good, it cannot remain deprived of being, nor can it be deprived of the Good because of [its] being. For it is at the same time being and good. And that which as wholly evil is a descent and a sort of departure from the first Good is also properly deprived of being. For how can that which cannot participate in the Good advance to the realm of being? But what is not wholly evil, being a sub-contrary

to a certain good and not to the whole Good, is ordered and made good by virtue of the preeminence of the good wholes. And it is evil to the former goods to which it is a contrary, but it depends on the latter insofar as it is they are good. For it is not possible for anything to be a contrary to these wholes, but all things must follow them in accordance with justice or cease to exist altogether.

2.8 [*DMS* c. 10, pp. 188,19 – 190,14] Therefore Plato rightly says in *Timaeus* [30a2–3] that "all things are good, while nothing is evil" according to the demiurgic will. But in his discussions with the geometer he affirms that "evil is by no means destroyed," and that "from necessity" it comes to be included among existing things. For all things are made good by the will of the father and nothing having to do with his creation is evil, neither what is nor what comes to be. And, in distinguishing the levels of nature, he cannot escape including evil among particulars, the good of which it destroys. Since even darkness does not exist when it is totally unmixed with its contrary and deprived of light; while [the darkness] that is created in light and in all respects limited by it is one among existing things. And for the sun, nothing is dark. For it provides a weak clarity even to what is dark; but for air, darkness is the privation of the light that is in it. Therefore through the father of all things all things are good, and there is evil in those things that are not capable of remaining in complete accordance with the Good.

2.9 [*DMS* c. 32, p. 212,1–23] But if matter is also necessary for the All and, were it absent, the world, that "wholly great and blessed God" (*Timaeus* 34b8), would not exist, how can we then still come to refer to it as the nature of evil? For evil is one thing and Necessity is another. The latter is that without which it would be impossible to be, while the other is the privation of being. So if it produces the means for the generation of the whole world itself and was created originally so that it would be the Receptacle of generation and, as it were, its Nurse and Mother, how could it be called evil and even the primal evil? If we speak variously of the lack of measure, limitlessness, and the like—for the possible senses are that it opposes measure, that it is as though its absence and withdrawal, and that it is its substrate and, so to speak, what lacks measure and limit—yet matter is not such as to oppose it or, in general, to do anything, since by its nature it cannot be acted upon because it lacks the power of being acted upon. Nor is it the withdrawal

of measure and limit—for it is not the same thing as privation, since when both are present there is no privation, but matter both exists and takes on their image. And so its own lack of limit and measure must be without measure and limit. But if it lacks both of these [*sc.* measure and limit], how will it be their contrary? Moreover, how can what lacks the Good be evil? For evil flees the nature of the Good, and in general every contrary flees its contrary state. But if matter seeks out, conceives, and, as Plato says, nurtures generation, then, since it is Mother, no evil can come from it to what originates from it, or, rather, what comes to be in it.

2.10 [*DMS* c. 36, p. 220,10–33] …And life for the gods themselves will be neither without pain nor beyond the trouble of mortal life and they will have as part of their nature something that is difficult to endure and foreign and, as it were, troubling. But if matter is neither of these, then what will it be in itself? Or must we call it what it is often called, the Necessity? For there is one nature of the good, another of evil, and each opposes the other; but there is a third nature, neither wholly good nor wholly evil, but necessary. Evil is drawn away from the Good and flees its nature; but that which is necessary is entirely what it is for the sake of the Good, and has a relationship to the Good, and the kind of creation it experienced was because of the Good. So if the matter of all things exists so that there might be generation, and if nothing else exists for its sake, such that we could say that it is both an end and a good, then we must say that matter is necessary for generation and is not evil and it becomes necessary in this way through divine will and that it is necessary because the forms are unable to support themselves. For it is proper that the cause of all that is good produce not only things that are good in themselves, but also the nature that is not good simply and in itself, but desires the Good and in desiring the Good gives to other things their coming-to-be, such as it is, from itself. For its very lack of what is good contributes to the creation of sensible objects, since being not only brings about existing things but also those things that desire participation in being, whose being is in their desire for being. So there is one thing that is the primary object of desire, another that desires another thing and has its good in it, and a third thing that is wholly intermediate, because it is desirable to the latter, while it itself desires the former beings that are above it and provide the purpose for its existence.

2.11 [*DMS* c. 37, pp. 220,1 – 222,25] If we therefore consider matter by reasoning in this way, we shall find that it is neither good nor evil but necessary only, and as generated for the sake of the Good it is good, but not simply good. And as the last of existing things, to the extent that evil is what is furthest removed from the Good, it is evil, but not simply evil, but, as we have said, it is necessary. In sum, it is not true to hold that evil itself exists, for there is no unmixed evil or primal evil. If evil were contrary to all that is good, it would be fitting, since that Good is prior to that which exists in another thing, exists in itself and is primary, that evil be twofold: one evil in itself and the other evil in another thing. If evil is contrary to those goods that have their being in another thing, then much more is evil in another and does not exist in itself. For neither is the Good to which this evil is contrary [good in itself], but it is good in another thing and does not exist apart. What will be contrary to the primary Good—not evil, but something else among existing things? For all things exist because of that Good and for the sake of it. It is impossible that the contrary exists due to its contrary nature; rather, this contrary itself is not-being. For contraries destroy each other; and in general all contraries proceed from one apex and genus; but what will be the genus of the primary Good? For what is beyond the nature of the Good? And what being would be homogeneous with it? There would need to be something else before both of these, of which each of them is a part; and then the Good would not be the principle of things, but that would be an element common to both. So there is nothing contrary to the primary Good, nor to all things that are participated, but only to those things whose participation is not uniform. We have discussed this topic before.

2.12 [*DMS* c. 38, pp. 222,1 – 224,31] But let us leave the topic of matter and take up again that of privation, because some say that this is both evil and the complete contrary to the Good. For matter underlies a thing when form is present, while privation never exists, being always maleficent and contrary to the forms. And matter seeks the Good, reaches it, and takes from it, while the other flees the Good, promotes corruption, and is entirely evil. But if the first Good were the same as being and at once good, being, and one nature, then it would be necessary also that primary evil be privation, since it is not-being in itself and contrary to being. But if the Good is different from being and the two are not identical to each other, then evil is also different from privation. And insofar as the Good is not being, but above being,

and being is not in and of itself [good], but is a falling away from the Good, its first light and, as it were, the brilliance of the Good, thus also privation is simply not [evil]. Since even when privation is present there is yet no evil, and when it has come to exist in its entirety the nature of evil has departed (What I mean is, for example, such as the case of illness in the body, when disorder is present, but not wholly. For the privation of all order annihilates at the same time the subject and the evil in the subject). And privation consists in what does not yet exist, but it is not an evil. For fire and water and the other elements existing in themselves are the privation of what does not yet exist from them; but there is no evil in them. In general, as we have said, it is necessary to understand lack of order and of measure as, on the one hand, the absence of those things—I mean of measure and order—and on the other as the nature that is contrary to both. For in the latter it opposes order and measure, while in the former it is only the removal of them and is nothing but a negation. Again, when they are present these qualities are what they are, while, when absent, they leave only the privations of themselves. If, then, evil is contrary to the Good and differs from it, while privation is neither in conflict with the state [of which it is a privation] nor by nature does anything since its existence is to be completely weak and powerless, as their argument puts it, how shall we attribute evil action to privation which is entirely removed from action? For activity is form and potency; but privation is formless and weak, not potency, but rather absence of potency…

2.13 [*DMS* c. 39, p. 228,41–42] …But not to be is better than to be evil, for the former is the privation of being, but the latter is privation of the Good…

2.14 [*DMS* c. 51, p. 246,1–8] We must now discuss what evil itself is. But to know the nature of evil in itself and its form will seem to be the most difficult thing of all, if all knowledge is contact with a form, but evil is without form and, in a certain sense, a privation. Perhaps even this will become clear, if, by looking toward the Good itself and the number of good things, we will thereby reflect on what evil is. For as the first Good is beyond all things, so evil itself is deprived of all good things (I mean *qua* evil) and is the defect and privation of them…

2.15 [*DMS* c. 52, pp. 248,1 – 250,18] Evil thus being by its nature such as we have said, we should now discuss how it is the contrary of the

Good. For it is certainly privation, but not absolute privation. Since it co-exists with the state of which it is the privation, it renders that state weak by its presence, while itself taking on the state's power and form. Consequently, even the privations of forms, being absolute privations, are only the absences of states, and do not oppose them; but the privations of goods are opposed to their states and are in a sense their contraries. For they are not completely impotent and unproductive, since they co-exist with the powers of the states and are, in a way, led by them to form and activity. Plato knows this well when he says that in itself injustice is both weak and inactive, but by the presence of justice it both possesses power and is led to act, not remaining in its own nature nor only in lifelessness, since the living being in its priority gives participation in life even to evil; and all of life is in itself power. But evil, because created in a different power, is contrary to the Good, using its power to oppose it; and the greater the inherent power, the more the activities and operations of evil, while the weaker the power, the fewer the activities and operations…

2.16 [*DMS* c. 54, p. 252,1–22] Evil is therefore in itself inefficacious and impotent. If it is also involuntary, as Plato says, and unwilled, it will therefore be the privation of the very first triad of the Good: will, power, and activity. The Good by its own nature is willed, potent, and efficacious; evil, however, is unwilled, weak, and inefficacious. For nothing can will what leads to its destruction, no power is capable of destroying what possesses it, and no activity can have an existence that does not correspond to its power. But just as some seek evils because they appear good to them and so the evil seems to be willed—we mean that it is such because of mixture with the Good—, so also both power and productivity are apparent in evil, since evil does not exist in itself nor *qua* evil, but through its external connection to that upon which it is parasitic and in relationship to which it is said to be evil. And this, it seems to me, is what Socrates in *Theaetetus* shows to those able to follow him, when he says that evil is neither the privation nor the contrary of the Good—for privation is not capable of making anything nor does it have any capability at all, nor does a contrary in itself possess either power or activity—but for this reason he calls it a sub-contrary in a sense, because it is in itself privation. Yet since it is not complete privation, but in addition to its own state it takes on a measure of power and activity, it assumes its role as contrary. And it is neither privation nor contrary in an absolute sense, but is the sub-contrary to the Good,

a term that truly signifies, for those who are used to giving it substantive meaning, a kind of *parhupostasis*…

2.17 [*In Tim.* I 374,13–20] If you should consider this so-called evil to be deprived of all good, you place it beyond even absolute not-being. For, as the primary Good is beyond being, so the primary evil exceeds the nothingness of not-being. If, then, absolute not-being is closer to being than absolute evil, but the former is among those things whose existence is impossible, so much more is the existence of the latter impossible.

2.18 [*In Tim.* I 376,1–11] For the soul does not possess the cause of things contrary to nature—on the contrary if it is contrary to nature, it shuns nature, but even nature is a soul—nor does body [possess the cause] of what is contrary to reason. For those who are good have both a body and with it virtue. In *Theaetetus* [176a] [Plato says], "It is impossible both that evil be destroyed, Theodorus, and that it exist among the gods. But it necessarily hovers about mortal nature and this sphere." For if evil necessarily circulates in this mortal sphere, it would not, according to Plato, be absolute not-being nor be separated from all existing things.

2.19 [*In Parm.* V, 999,19 – 1000,33] One might reasonably ask how anything could possibly follow from what is not. For what could occur in what is not? How could that which is wholly not-being be the basis of proof for anything? For when it is removed it cannot in and of itself experience anything, nor can it bear any relation with other things, since it is simply not-being. We should respond to this inquiry that, as we have learned in *Sophist* (258e), by "not-being," is meant both "that which in no way is" and "privation," because [the latter] in itself is non-existent, but exists *per accidens*; and it can mean matter, which is non-existent insofar as it is by its own nature without form, limit, and shape; it may also refer to all material existence, since this has being in appearance, but does not truly exist; and further, it may mean all that is perceptible, which "comes to be and passes away, but never really exists" (*Timaeus* 28a); and before these it means the not-being in souls to the extent that they are said to be the first of generated beings and not really to belong to those things that, being in the order of the intelligibles, truly exist; and further, before souls, it may refer to the not-being in the intelligibles themselves, the first Otherness of

what is, as *Sophist* taught us (255de), which he [Plato] says is no less [being] than being itself (258a); and even beyond these it may mean the not-being before being, which is also the cause of all beings that transcend the multiplicity in things. If not-being has so many senses, then obviously we should never postulate what in no way is, since this cannot be spoken of or known, as the Eleatic Stranger shows, supporting Parmenides' argument on the matter (258d). He also said that what in no way is is unknowable and unspeakable, because all knowledge and supposition knows and articulates some thing, while what in no way is is no such thing; for Parmenides himself is not one to speak of not-being, which is something impossible to do and [represents] nothing. Whenever we say that the many "are not," or that the One "is not," or that soul "is not," we mean by this that something else exists, but not soul, and we are seeking what follows from this; as if we were to say, "But let us not include Intellect among existing things," we do not mean by this "let there be what in no way exists," but "Let Intellect be removed from what exists." This is tantamount to saying "Let Intellect not be among all things that exist;" so one thing is said not to exist in the context of another thing existing. Thus the hypothesis is not about what in no way is, but what in one respect is, but in another is not, or what is a this, but not a that. For generally negations are products of intellectual Otherness; for this reason [something] is "not-horse" because it is some other thing, or "not-man" because it is something different. For this reason also [Plato] himself said in *Sophist* (258e) that, whenever we speak of not-being, we mean only a denial of being, not the opposite of being, applying "opposite" to what is to the greatest extent removed from being and is completely fallen short of it. So that it is not the case that when we say "is not" we are introducing what in no way is, or when we postulate not-being we are postulating that, but we are signifying by not-being as much as can be known and articulated in speech.

2.20 [*In Parm.* VI, 1072,32 – 1073,8] It is not unclear how [Plato] himself in *Sophist* (258ab) spoke of the relationship of not-being to being, and that [he said that] being is superior. In that very place he states that not-being is no less [being] than being, but by appending "if it is proper to speak this way," he made clear the preeminence of being. Therefore at all levels of being assertion is simply superior to negation. Yet because not-being is spoken of in many ways, one sense being superior to being, another at the same level as being, and another the privation of being,

it is quite clear that we shall recognize three forms of negation as well, one superior to assertion, another inferior to assertion, and another in some manner on par with assertion.

2.21 [*Th. Pl.* II, pp. 38,26 – 39,5] And not-being itself, to which pertains also the negation of being, we sometimes conceive to be beyond being and say that it is cause and, as it were, producer of being. But other times we declare it to be one with being, just as, I think, the Eleatic Stranger demonstrates that "not-being, if it is permitted to say it, is no less [existent] than being." And at other times we concede that it is the privation of being and the lack of being. It is clearly in this [last] sense that we speak of all of coming-to-be and matter as not-being.

Analysis

Proclus

From the beginning of his treatise on evil Proclus shows his concern to prove that Plato is not inconsistent when, on the one hand, he claims in *Timaeus* that nothing can oppose the will of the Demiurge and, on the other, he insists in *Theaetetus* that evil exists necessarily (c. 10 [2.8]). He feels that he has demonstrated the compatibility of these two claims in his definition of evil as a privation, lack, or deficiency of the Good which, although these terms might suggest that it is nothing more than a negation of being or good, possesses some degree of existence. If he succeeds at all in providing a cogent argument in support of this point, his success is due in large part to the manner in which he modified the concept of privation, expanding it beyond the narrow sense given to it by Aristotle, as absolute not-being.[1] This reformulation of the Aristotelian concept of privation is thus central to Proclus' doctrine of evil insofar as, to a large extent, the defense of monism embedded in it stands or falls on the sufficiency of that reformulation to account for evil's existence in such a manner that it in no way threatens the goodness of the demiurgic creation. It is thus proper that we begin

[1] On Proclus' treatment of privation, cf. Isaac (1977–1982), 15; Beierwaltes (1962), p. 71, n. 162; Steel (1998), 89ff.; Opsomer (2001[1]), 162ff.; Opsomer and Steel (1999[1]), 18ff. For Aristotle's account of the four modes of opposites, including those of contrary (where Proclus places evil) and of privation, see *Cat.* 11b15–13b35.

our examination with Proclus' treatment of evil as privation, where he attempts to reconcile these two texts of Plato.

Proclus' reformulation begins with a distinction between two types of privation, one which is the absence (*absentia*) of a certain state, and the other the opposite or contrary (*contrariationis*) of a state. He does this first in c. 7 [2.5], asserting there that evil must be the sort of privation that is opposite the Good, whereas other privations are merely absences of states, "…taking nothing from their own natures for their existence…" He later amplifies on this difference:

> In general, as we have said, it is necessary to understand lack of order and of measure as, on the one hand, the absence of those things—I mean of measure and order—and, on the other, as the nature that is contrary to both. For in the latter it opposes order and measure, while in the former it is only the removal of them and is nothing but a negation. [*DMS* c. 38 (2.12)]

Evil, he repeats, must be the latter sort of privation, that which opposes or is contrary to the state of which it is a lack. However, privation of states of being, which is the privation under discussion here, cannot be such as to oppose those states, since it is weak and impotent. If evil is to exist, it must be privation of the Good, not of being.[2] And privations of the Good are, necessarily and exclusively, privations of the second sort mentioned above, so that evil, and only evil, is a privation that opposes the Good. And if there is to be an absolute evil, it must be the contrary of the primary Good, the Good above being.

But as far as Proclus is concerned, there is no absolute evil. Proclan evil exists in beings solely as a function of the privation of the Good in them. But insofar as nothing that exists can be permanently and thoroughly deprived of the Good, evil cannot exist in an absolute sense, which is to say that even evil must have some share in the Good. Indeed, through a rather ingenious bit of reasoning that may have been unique in the history of Platonism, Proclus argues that it is by virtue of its participation in the Good that evil gains its 'power' as evil.

> But this privation [i.e. of the Good], incapable of existing in and of itself nor completely absolved from that nature of which it is the privation, becoming in a certain sense empowered by that nature, because of its implication with it is situated in the order of those things that are opposite to the Good. For the other privations are only absences of states, taking nothing from their own natures for their existence; but the Good,

[2] Cf. Steel (1998), 92ff. and Opsomer and Steel (1999[1]), 19.

> due to the excellence of its power, empowers even the privation of itself. [*DMS* c. 7 (2.5)]

The Good, then, by the very "excellence of its own power," grants potency even to the privation of itself. Rather than diminishing evil's deficiency, therefore, the Good strengthens it. In this and other respects the privation that is evil is different from other forms of lack. Evil as privation of the good cannot be privation of the first Good, the Good that is beyond being, for then evil, as the contrary of the first principle, would itself be an absolute principle. Evil can exist only in the individual states of things, that is, in those parts of things that have some share in the Good.[3] This means that for any entity in which evil is present, evil exists as privation of the Good in some state (or states) 's' that makes 's' weak by its presence but which itself gains the "power and form" of the positive existence of 's' (that is, the good in which it participates) in return (c. 52 [2.15]). Thus the privation in "s" that is evil is not merely the absence of 's' but is moreover some sort of potency that "actively" opposes it (insofar as it opposes the good in which 's' participates) (c. 38 [2.12]). Proclus goes so far as to say that in this manner evil is productive and possesses both form and activity.[4] Moreover, unlike privation as absence, in which case, of course, the privation 'exists' in the absence of the state of which it is the privation, privation of the Good cannot exist in the absence of the good (c. 7 [2.5]). Thus evil, which opposes the Good, depends for its existence upon and gains its sustenance from it. Hence it is the case both that absolute privation of the Good is impossible and that there is a real distinction between privation conceived as the absence of being and privation as the contrary to the Good.

The key texts for this aspect of Proclus' concept of evil are *Theaetetus* 176a and *Sophist* 257b–259b.[5] In the first of these passages Plato, in Proclus' view, establishes three basic truths—that evil exists, that it necessarily exists, and that it is ultimately good (*DMS* c. 6 [2.4]). The proof of the necessity of evil is tied to what Proclus takes to be Plato's concept of evil as the contrary of the Good. The laws governing the chain of being demand that there be an unbroken causal nexus from

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[3] Cf. *DMS* c. 8 [2.6]: only mixed goods are participated by privation.

[4] *DMS* c. 52 [2.15]; although in and of itself it is unproductive and impotent: cf c. 54 [2.16].

[5] For a similar interpretation of the *Theaetetus* passage by Asclepius, cf. Mansfeld, (1992), 252.

the first principle to the last and lowest of the hypostases. In the lower orders of being entities participate only intermittently in the first principle; thus, of necessity, privation of the Good exists in both senses of that term. In the lowest of the hypostases, where the distance from, and so the deprivation of, the Good is the greatest, the privation becomes opposition to the Good for two reasons. First, in and of itself this lowest degree of being is complete lack and indeterminacy and so would seem to qualify as contrary to the Good. But, secondly, because as complete lack it possesses in itself no power or activity, its ability to oppose the Good must come from an external source, which is, ultimately, the Good itself (*DMS* c. 7 [2.5]). Plato acknowledged, then, that there can be no true contrary or privation of the Good, no evil *qua* evil, since nothing that exists is entirely deprived of the first principle. It is for this reason that in *Theaetetus* he employs the term "sub-contrary" to describe the relationship of evil to the Good as one of not total contrariety.[6] Evil is not wholly so, which is to say that its opposition to the Good is not absolute, insofar as it has no power or activity of its own. And its ability to oppose the Good extends only as far as particular goods, not to the whole Good.[7] Proclus closely associates Plato's use of this term with his own concept of evil as a *parhupostasis*, that is, a kind of secondary existence. In contrast to entities that possess a principal cause for their existence, evil is adventitious and indeterminate, governed by diverse powers with no unifying force to direct it toward a defining end (*DMS* cc. 49–54). Evil is not done for its own sake nor does it play a determined role within the dynamic process of creation.[8] Thus the manner of evil's opposition to the Good must be carefully circumscribed, its intrinsic nature kept clearly distinguished from its externally derived power.

Because the power of evil is derived entirely from its contrary,[9] evil is neither voluntary nor willed (as it is the deprivation of the first triad of the Good: will, power, and activity: *DMS* c. 54 [2.16]). Proclus thereby subscribes to the standard Platonic axiom that no one truly

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[6] On the sense of the term "sub-contrary," cf. Isaac (1977–1982), 125 and Steel (1998), 101, n. 46.

[7] *DMS* c. 9 [2.7]. This also means that evil can be transformed into good.

[8] This assertion would appear to contradict the rather commonly held idea (found, for example, in Plotinus) that evil furthers the good by fulfilling a specific role in creation.

[9] Cf. Steel (1998), 99: "So it is only thanks to the good on which it feeds that evil can attack the good."

chooses what is contrary to the good, but only appears to do so when seeking what seems to be good, but is not.[10] And evil can take on the appearance of good only to the extent that it is mixed with the Good (c. 54 [2.16]). What attracts us to do evil is what appears to us to be its positive attributes—its power and activity—but we mistake what is actually only a phantom power, a power-through-another, for a natural potency that is good.

Divergent Readings

Proclus' treatment of evil as privation is in large part a response to the theories of his predecessors. Very early in *DMS* (c. 2 [2.1]) he summarizes one of the most difficult challenges to his own interpretation of *Theaetetus*. One must do more, he says, than simply assert that a sub-contrary to the Good exists necessarily, since as it stands, the statement forces us to conclude that evil does not, in fact, exist. For (a) whatever does not seek the Good does not exist; (b) the sub-contrary to the Good cannot, at least *prima facie*, seek after that to which it is contrary;[11] therefore, (c) evil, as sub-contrary to the Good, cannot exist. Proclus directly addresses this argument in c. 9 [2.7], but not before setting out opposing theories on another aspect of this issue. After outlining his own view in c. 7 [2.5], in the two subsequent chapters he describes the positions of others. Here he mentions two groups of thinkers, one claiming that evil in itself is privation in the sense of absolute not-being and is fully contrary to the primary Good.[12] They accept Aristotle's differentiation between matter and privation, which is based on the idea that, while matter in a sense exists as substance and co-cause with form of what comes to be, privation is absolute not-being and, as contrary to the Good, the cause of evil (*kakopoion*: *Phys.* 192a13–25).[13] They are opposed by others who, like Proclus himself, hold that not-being cannot be completely devoid of a share in being and the Good (c. 8–9 [2.6–7]). The first group would appear to be either Aristotelians or others sympathetic to this feature of Peripatetic doctrine. A clearer delineation of

[10] As we shall see, Proclus' view of the soul's responsibility for its own sinfulness, however, is inconsistent with this idea.

[11] Cf. Aristotle *Phys.* 192a14ff. and Calcidius *In Tim.* cc. 286–287.

[12] Proclus in *In Parm.* V, 1000, 350 [2.19] makes clear how exactly he feels that this argument fails: we cannot even postulate complete not-being, for not-being can only be postulated over and against some being.

[13] Cf. Hager (1962), 79.

their position comes later in c. 38 [2.12], where Proclus refutes a theory of evil that he again attributes to unnamed philosophers.

> …[they] say that this [*sc.* privation] is both evil and the complete contrary to the Good. For matter underlies a thing when form is present, while privation never exists, being always maleficent and the contrary of forms. And matter seeks the Good, reaches it, and takes from it, while the other flees the Good, promotes corruption, and is entirely evil.

According to these thinkers, privation is absolute evil and "the complete contrary to the Good." Following Aristotle, they maintain that, therefore, matter is to be distinguished from privation insofar as it seeks the Good and is present with form as its substratum. They no doubt also maintained that matter possessed privation, but only *per accidens* and not essentially, and so could not be primary evil.[14] It is clear from Proclus' comments that when these philosophers claim that privation is the contrary of the Good they really mean contrary of the *Forms*; that is, they understand 'privation' in the strictly Aristotelian sense of absolute not-being. Thus he goes on to argue that only if we assume that the first Good is equivalent to the highest order of being could we then conclude that privation, in the sense they give to the term, is primary evil. But if, as is, of course, the case, the first Good is beyond being, then privation is not primary evil, since evil, if it is to be the contrary of the Good, would then have to be something beyond even not-being.

In his commentary on *Timaeus* Calcidius recounts the same controversy, which he describes as a disagreement within Platonism.[15] Certain Platonists, he says—like the philosophers described by Proclus in *DMS* c. 38 [2.12], but for different reasons—deny that matter is absolute evil and assert, rather, that evil consists in the "lack of good," which, as in Proclus' account, is taken to be indistinguishable from lack of form, i.e. the privation of being.

> There are those who believe that Plato observed that that disorderly and chaotic motion is not present in matter, but in the substances and bodies which are considered to be the principles and elements of the world. For if matter lacks form and order, then it is certainly by its own nature also motionless, and not merely motionless, but also incapable of change—for changes happen not to matter, but to bodies that possess

[14] This appears to be the same position as that of Calcidius' source for cc. 286–288, on which, see below.

[15] The Platonists described by Calcidius were, evidently, responding directly to the dualistic theory of evil of Numenius.

> qualities—and by the same reasoning, insofar as it is motionless, it is also without a soul. Furthermore, they say that evil is the lack of good, as are formlessness, impoverishment, and measurelessness, and so when a negative part of speech is appended to the virtues what results are the opposites of virtues, that is imprudence, injustice, and ignorance. This is the kind of disagreement that exists among Platonist philosophers. [*In Tim.* c. 301, pp. 302,17 – 303,8]

The examples that Calcidius cites are the opposites of certain states of being, which, he says, they conceive by negating the positive terms for those states. So *contrary* of form is understood by them to be *privation* of form. These Platonists, then, have adopted the Aristotelian notion, described earlier (cc. 286–287) by Calcidius, that privation, as absolute not-being, is, in all cases, the "contradiction" of form; and as such, it "hinders" and "thwarts" the formation of bodies. Clearly Proclus' argument against the philosophers in *DMS* c. 38 [2.12] of his treatise applies as well to these anonymous Platonists. The problem with their definition of evil is that they confuse privation of form or being with privation of the Good, and only the latter can properly be called an opposite or contrary. Privation in the former sense, as the language of these Platonists itself suggests, is no more than the mere absence of states of being, a negation of form without the potency or activity to oppose anything. How can what is a mere 'lack' possess the capability to "hinder" or "thwart" the productive power of the Forms?

Proclus' view of his predecessors in this regard, then, is that in their theories of evil they had too readily and without reflection adopted Aristotle's definition of privation as absolute deprivation of being. In doing so, they had failed to heed the Eleatic Stranger's assertion in Plato's *Sophist* that there can be no such absolute deprivation since there is no type of not-being that constitutes the contrary of being (257b and 258e). Of the two senses of privation employed by Proclus in his treatise, privation as lack and as contrariety, only the former is properly relevant to being. And even if we were to accept their postulate of absolute not-being as the contrary of being, this could not as well be considered to be the contrary of the Good. For the true contrary of the Good would surpass even absolute not-being. There are, of course, other reasons for holding that nothing opposes the Good in all respects, the most important of which is that there can be no "unmixed" evil. The failure of these philosophers to recognize the last point is the result of their having ignored or misunderstood a second text in Plato, *Theaetetus* 176a,

which states unmistakably that, although we may legitimately speak of the contrary of the Good, there can be nothing that entirely opposes it, since nothing is completely devoid of it.

Plotinus

Like Proclus, Plotinus saw the need for a reappraisal of Aristotle's concept of privation as part of his own formulation of the nature of evil. How, then, does Plotinus' modification of Aristotelian privation fare under Proclus' critique?[16] It is well known that his treatise on matter (II.4) and, to a lesser extent, his treatise on evil (I.8) contain an extensive analysis of the distinction that Aristotle draws between matter and privation. At I.8.3 he establishes that primary evil must be that to which all types of privation, such as unmeasuredness, formlessness, and the like, are not accidental, but part of its essence. Consequently, Plotinus is in agreement with Calcidius' Platonists with respect to the claim that whatever possesses privation *per accidens* possesses evil only secondarily. Yet the example that Plotinus cites for this is the soul (I.8.5 and .11), not, as for Calcidius' Platonists, matter, for Plotinian matter is, indeed, *by nature* privation. Plotinus argues at length in the last part of his treatise on matter (II.4.14–16) that privation cannot be an accidental attribute of matter insofar as privation can exist *per accidens* only in what also possesses a rational principle or form, and matter in and of itself lacks all form. Thus matter just is unlimitedness and as such is primary evil.

Plotinus thereby variously distinguishes his notion of privation from that of Aristotle. He manifestly rejects Aristotle's idea that privation, as the ultimate opposition to all form, can have no independent existence but can only reside in another entity (I.8.11). Absolute unlimitedness does have a kind of existence and nature as opposition to form (II.4.16) and as a sort of product of the One (II.4.15–16). But it would seem to follow from this—and I think this concept is an implicit criticism of the Peripatetics—that privation must not be understood, as it was by Aristotle, to be absolute not-being. It is not difficult to determine why Plotinus himself saw the need to redefine Aristotelian privation: by

[16] Cf. the comments of O'Meara, (1999), 96 and 122ff. on Plotinus' concept of privation and his appeal to *Theaetetus* 176aff. See also Hager (1962), 86f. and (1987), 152f.; Moreau (1951), 127ff.; Corrigan (1996), *passim*; O'Brien (1996[1]), 173ff. and (1996[2]); Schäfer (2000), 15ff.

identifying matter with privation he could claim against the Peripatetics that matter is absolute evil, yet could not accept what, according to Aristotle's notion of privation, follows from this identification, that matter thereby absolutely opposes being and the Good. For if he were to accept the Aristotelian definition of privation as absolute not-being, then his doctrine of evil could easily be interpreted as a return to a dualism that bears resemblance to that of Plutarch, Atticus, and Numenius. Plotinus softens the dualistic features of his doctrine by granting to matter a measure of being and by including it within the taxonomy that derives from the One. Matter in its unlimitedeness can still be said to oppose the Good while maintaining its dependence on the Good. However, whether he was aware of it or not, in conceiving of matter in this way he places significant qualification on its absoluteness as evil.[17]

We can better appreciate Plotinus' doctrinal estrangement from many of his Platonist predecessors by looking at a later assessment of Aristotle's distinction between matter and privation that is most likely drawn from the Middle Platonist tradition. In cc. 286–288 of his commentary on Plato's *Timaeus*, Calcidius interprets Aristotle's *Physics* 192a3ff. as a refutation of the Platonist position that matter and privation are identical. Rather, Aristotle maintains, privation is, along with matter and form, one of the three principles of all things. Matter does possess privation—indeed, its ugliness, shapelessness, and lack of grace are due to its participation in privation—but only accidentally. Taken in itself, matter is quite different from privation: it cooperates in the formation of bodies and so can be said to be desirous of form (and therefore of the elimination of privation); it also enjoys a sort of existence insofar as it is continuously in the state of becoming. Thus privation, not matter, stands in unqualified opposition to form and being. To the extent that matter participates in privation, it also participates in evil, but evil is not part of its nature. Through its tenuous hold on being, matter naturally seeks the Good. Certainly it is largely against this Platonist interpretation, which employs Peripatetic doctrine as corroboration, that Plotinus directs his comments in I.8 and II.4, for it contradicts the Plotinian theory of evil on two fundamental points, in its related claims that matter possesses privation only accidentally and

[17] Plotinus also rejects Aristotle's notion that matter exists "by accident." For him as for Proclus, matter is Plato's Necessity.

that matter itself exists merely accidentally. To establish matter as the principle of absolute evil, Plotinus was forced to refute both of these claims.[18]

Plotinus' understanding of the manner in which evil is the privation of the Good can be gleaned from three passages in I.8 and II.4. At I.8.3.4–8 he says that, if evil exists, it must be as a kind of "form" of not-being within things that have a share in not-being. By "not-being," he explains, he means not absolute not-being, but only what is other than being. He then elaborates: the "otherness" that is the not-being of evil is not the same as motion and rest that are associated with being; rather, it is as though an "image of being" or something still more non-existent. There is an unmistakable allusion here to *Sophist* 257b–259b, where Plato establishes that not-being is not the contrary to being, but is only other than it. Yet how exactly Plotinus construes not-being as otherness is not at all transparent. There is, however, another passage in his treatise on matter (II.4) that will help to illuminate his meaning. Matter, he explains at the beginning of chapter 16, is not the same as otherness *per se*, but is rather identical to that "portion" of otherness that opposes what truly exist, the *logoi* or rational principles. "Therefore even as not-being it is in this way a sort of being and the same as privation, if privation is opposition to things that exist in rational form." His justification for speaking of different "portions" of otherness is, again, the text of *Sophist*, in particular the Eleatic Stranger's claim that otherness is divided into parts and that, as otherness itself possesses being, so do its different parts (257cd and 258e).[19] Yet, needless to say, Plato would not have characterized any such portion of otherness in the way Plotinus does here.

Finally, in I.8.6 Plotinus, in discussing Plato's argument in *Theaetetus* 176a for the necessity of the existence of evil, explains why there must be a contrary to the highest Good.[20] First of all, Plato is speaking not of any pair of contraries, but of the Good and its contrary. But if

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[18] Cf. O'Brien (1996), 178ff.

[19] On this see O'Brien (1996), 173.

[20] On Simplicius' well known refutation of this passage at *In Cat.* 109, 12ff., see Opsomer (2001), 184ff. Plotinus as well as others, he says, maintain that there are principles (*arkhai*) that are opposed to each other in every way, having nothing in common nor bearing any relation to each other. They consider such contrary principles to be substances and in this way introduce contrariety into substances, there being no common subject in which they reside. As examples of this contrariety of principles Simplicius cites being/not-being, beginning/end, and good/evil.

the Good is substance (*ousia*) or what is beyond substance, then how is there a contrary to it? The Aristotelian principle[21] that there is no contrary to substance has been demonstrated in the case of individual substances, but not with regard to wholes (i.e. universals). Moreover, contraries of individual substances share with them the same species or genus; the contrary of a universal, on the other hand, has nothing in common with it, so that the opposition is complete and unqualified. Universals, as principles, embrace all elements of that of which they are principles, so that, other than its contrary, there is no independently existing thing beyond it in which the universal and its contrary might jointly share. Thus the indefiniteness and unmeasuredness that the evil nature possesses are "extreme" contraries to the definition and measure of the divine nature, which Plotinus describes as "true being" (*to alêthôs einai*: .6.46). In this way, he concludes, we have shown that it is not without exception the case that substance has no contrary.[22]

We find from these texts that Plotinus' conception of evil as privation is to some extent consonant with that of Proclus, but much more prominent are the points of contention. First of all, Plotinus sides with Proclus against other Platonists on one important point: if the privation that is evil is taken in the Aristotelian sense of absolute not-being, then evil becomes no more than an absence or negation of being. As far as Plotinus is concerned, if evil is to have some degree of existence, it must (a) be understood as not-being in the sense of "otherness" as Plato sets out that concept in his *Sophist*, and for which he claims a share in being, and (b) be specifically that "portion" of otherness that is opposed to the Good. So it is possible to speak of a 'nature' of evil, and this nature possesses such 'attributes' as unmeasuredness, formlessness, and indefiniteness which are to be understood, not merely as the deprivation of measure, form, and definition, but as the contraries of these attributes of the rational principles. However—and here is where Plotinus parts company with Proclus—he follows the anonymous philosophers described by Proclus and Calcidius in defining the privation of the Good exclusively as privation of form.[23] And, of course, he contra-

[21] Cf. *Cat.* 3b, 24ff. and *Phys.* 189a, 29f.

[22] See O'Meara's (1999), 127ff., analysis of this passage. See also O'Brien (1996), 175ff. and Opsomer and Steel (1999[1]), 15.

[23] It is significant that Plotinus employs the same examples of negation of form as Calcidius, i.e. measurelessness in opposition to measure, formlessness in opposition to form, and lack in opposition to self-sufficiency (I.8.3.13–17). That he also means by these terms *opposition* to form is clear from I.8.6.

dicts them all in maintaining that this privation of the Good is matter. Privation is therefore not, as Aristotle had maintained and as Proclus' Platonists had agreed, merely an accidental property of matter, but is its 'essence.'

Proclus does not directly confront this part of Plotinus' theory, but we can easily imagine Proclus' response might have been. Plotinus' claim that he has allowed evil some sort of existence by identifying its not-being with "otherness," even if this is construed as opposition to the Good, fails under the weight of his further assertion that 'contrary to the Good' means just 'contrary to form or being.' Plotinus himself acknowledges that Plato placed the Good above being; its contrary must, then, be above not-being in any sense in which that term is to be used. Privation of form can only be absence of form, since the contrary of being cannot in any manner exist or even be postulated.[24] But what is properly the contrary of the Good can, and must, coexist with it.

It is obvious that (what is in Proclus' view) the unwarranted limitation that Plotinus places on his concept of privation is required by his equation of evil with matter. Matter is, by definition, privation of form and not of the Good, if the Good is above being. Making Aristotelian privation the essence rather than an accident of matter does nothing to change this. So even Plotinian matter can be only the complete absence of form, which is to say that it cannot 'be' at all (*DMS* c. 32 [2.9]).

Proclus might well have pointed to what Plotinus says in the latter part of I.8.6 for corroboration of his inconsistency in this matter. There, as we have seen, Plotinus purports to be demonstrating that the Good can have a contrary whether it is construed as substance or as what transcends substance. Yet the proof that he presents pertains exclusively to the possibility of the contrary of substance; no argument is provided to show that there can exist the opposite of the Good as he actually does conceive it, i.e. as above being. One explanation for this omission is that, to his mind, the argument laid out here sufficed for both possibilities.[25] There is little doubt that in his treatise on evil Plotinus considers privation of being to be interchangeable with privation of the Good. And the fact that he understood the strongest form of privation to extend no further than opposition to being further indicates that

[24] *DMS* c. 52 [2.15] (cf. c. 38 [2.12]) and *In Parm.* V, 1000 [2.19].

[25] This is the suggestion of O'Meara (1999), 127, who also recognizes this omission on the part of Plotinus.

in his thinking this was tantamount to privation of the Good. Proclus' critique, however, reveals the problem with such a claim. No argument for the possibility of the contrary to being, he implies, has any bearing on the question of the possibility of the contrary to the Good, given the ontological separation between the two. And if matter cannot be shown to be the true contrary of the Good, then Plotinus cannot claim that it is the primary evil.

There may, however, be another reason for Plotinus' omission of a direct argument for the possibility of a contrary of the Good-above-being to which he could point in his own defense. Let us turn again to II.4.16, where Plotinus indicates that he, like Proclus, finds in Plato multiple senses or 'parts' of otherness. At the outset of that chapter, we recall, he points out that matter is not otherness *simpliciter*, but specifically that portion of otherness that opposes the Forms. Plotinus has already made clear earlier in this treatise that primary Otherness—that is, the Otherness that is one of the *megista genê* of *Sophist* 254d–255e—is among the principles of intelligible matter (II.4.5.28ff.). It appears, then, that in Plotinus' reading of *Sophist*, the Eleatic Stranger establishes a hierarchy of otherness, so that we are to regard the otherness that is sensible matter as a particular 'part' of this primary Otherness, a kind of instantiation of the intelligible category. At the end of chapter 16 he outlines how these two levels of otherness define the different relationships of intelligible and primary matter to the strata of reality above them. Matter "there," that is, intelligible matter, he says, is being (*on*) because what is before it (*pro autês*) is above being; matter "here," however, is not-being because what is before it, what it is "other" than, is true being. The first Otherness, that which is a constituent in the generation of the intelligible world and helps to define that world's relationship to the first principle, "creates" intelligible matter and thereby determines the sense in which it, and the Forms of which it is the matter, are other than the primary Good. His characterization of the relationship of primary matter to true being, on the other hand, is the one to which we must look in order to understand his point in I.8.6: the "otherness" of primary matter is an instance or part of primary Otherness; strictly speaking, lower matter's instantiation of primary Otherness is its opposition to rational form, for the contrary of absolute not-being must be absolute being. In I.8.6 he is concerned solely with this lower matter, and so his argument rightly pertains exclusively to the contrary of the good of the forms, not of the primary Good. Yet it seems to be Plotinus' view that ultimately, if primary matter is the

contrary of the former, it is necessarily also the contrary of the latter. There is therefore for him no ontological separation between what is the contrary of form and what is the contrary of the Good, as there is for Proclus. And the reason for this is that there is a participatory relationship between the otherness of primary matter and intelligible Otherness. For, as we have seen, primary matter's participation in intelligible Otherness gives it its being as well as its capability to oppose the Good.[26]

What relationship, then, might Plotinus' interpretation of Plato have to Proclus' theory of evil? We should first consider in more detail Proclus' own exegesis of *Sophist* which, as *DMS* c. 8 [2.6] makes clear, plays an important role in his idea of evil as privation. His understanding of Plato can be gleaned from several passages which, for the sake of convenience, I summarize below:[27]

In Parm. V, 999–1000 [2.19] In *Sophist* the Eleatic Stranger recognizes two senses for "that which is not," (a) what is absolutely non-existent and (b) the negation of something which is in itself non-existent but exists accidentally. "That which in no way is" can refer [1] to matter, "…which is non-existent insofar as it is by its own nature without form, limit, and shape; [2] it may also refer to all material existence, since this has being in appearance, but does not truly exist; [3] and further, it may mean all that is perceptible, which 'comes to be and passes away, but never really exists' (*Timaeus* 28a); [4] and before these it means the not-being in souls to the extent that they are said to be the first of generated beings and not really to belong to those things that, being in the order of the intelligibles, truly exist; [5] and further, before souls, it may refer to the not-being in the intelligibles themselves, the first Otherness of what is, as *Sophist* taught us (255de), which he [Plato] says is no less [being] than being itself (258a);[28] [6] and even beyond these it may mean the not-being before being, which is also the cause of all beings that transcend the multiplicity in things" [bracketed numbers added]. The absolutely non-existent (a) cannot even be postulated, since it

[26] Put another way, its is through its not-being that matter is contrary to being, while it is through its being (which it gains by virtue of its participation in intelligible Otherness) that it opposes the Good-above-being.

[27] I do not list the scholium given by Kroll, *In Remp.* II, p. 375, 5ff., which depicts matter as representing a fifth sense of not-being different from the four commonly cited. This is not at all consistent with what Proclus says in the passages I summarize.

[28] This list is, of course, in ascending order from more to less non-existent.

cannot be spoken of or conceived. So when we state the non-existence of something, we can only mean the negation of being, not its opposite.

In Parm. VI, 1072–1073 [2.20] Plato in *Sophist* gives different senses to not-being: "…one sense being superior to being, another at the same level as being, and another the privation of being…"

Th. Pl. II, p. 38,26 – 39,5 [2.21] There are different senses to not-being: as beyond being and being's cause, as associated with being, which, as the Eleatic Stranger says, is "no less being than being," and as the privation and lack of being. In this manner we speak of the world of becoming and matter as not-being.

DMS c. 8 [2.6] Absolute not-being can exist neither through itself nor accidentally. The "intermittently" not-being, however, "associates with being," so that we can with justification call it either privation or otherness. (Primary) Otherness is part of the intelligible realm and is termed by the Eleatic Stranger "no less being than being." It is weaker than being, yet is governed by it.

Proclus thus finds in Plato a strict categorization of the senses of not-being. The most basic senses of not-being are as (1) absolute not-being, which exists neither through itself or accidentally, (2) not-being as negation of being, privation, or Otherness, which is non-existent through itself, but does exist accidentally, and (3) not-being as above being.[29] So, to the two senses of not-being which Plato recognizes in *Sophist* (1 and 2 above), Proclus adds a third, Neoplatonic sense, the not-being of the One or the Good. He is most concerned, however, with senses (1) and (2), about which he makes several claims. Only absolute not-being could qualify as the opposite of being; but such a thing is neither conceivable nor utterable. All types of not-being are, therefore, denials or negations of being. Negations of being can be further sub-divided into (a) Primary Otherness, which, in accordance with the Eleatic Stranger's remark that it is "no less being than being," is to be regarded as occupying the same level as being, and (b) the privation of being. This distinction is apparently required as a means of separating intelligible Oth-

[29] Seen another way, we have (1) true being, which exists through itself, (2) not-being as Otherness or privation, which does not exist through itself, but does exist accidentally, and (3) absolute not-being, which exists neither through itself nor accidentally.

erness, which is "weaker" than being but still exists at the level of pure being, from entities of the sensate world, whose existence involves privation in the sense of lack of being. The latter entities, therefore, are those that have no existence in and of themselves but exist *per accidens*; examples are matter, entities of the world of becoming, and souls.[30] Taken together, these two sub-divisions comprise everything that is generated from the Good, while (b) represents everything below the intelligible world.

So much is reasonably straightforward. But what relevance does all this have to the question posed by both Plotinus and Proclus as to what is properly the contrary to the Good? It will be immediately obvious that we are not to regard the Otherness of Plotinus' intelligible matter as its contrariety to the Good, since for him what is contrary to the Good is complete privation of being, and intelligible matter is part of the world of pure being. Only the otherness of primary matter, as privation itself, qualifies as a kind of contrariety, yet, as we are told in II.4.16, primary matter is the *direct* contrary of pure being, and thus only *indirectly* or *mediately* of the Good-above-being. Again, for Plotinus, insofar as primary matter is privation of being, it is also necessarily privation of the Good. Nonetheless the opposition of primary matter to the Good is, at best, mediated, and therein lies the difficulty for Plotinus. It might well be the case that Proclus' critique in *DMS* c. 3 [2.2], that if there is absolute evil, then in its contrariety to what is above pure being it must be more non-existent than pure not-being, was one Plotinus anticipated and attempted, ultimately unsuccessfully, to mitigate. As for Plotinus' claim that matter is absolute evil, Proclus' response is that, insofar as it is not absolute not-being, but part of the class of things that exist intermittently and accidentally (although the lowest extreme of that class), matter is not the opposite of being or of the Good, and so, even by Plotinus' definition,[31] it cannot be the principle of evil. Moreover, the very idea of the opposite of being is beyond both postulation and expression—as would be, as well, that which is beyond even abso-

[30] The translation of *In Parm.* V, 999–1000 [2.19] by Morrow and Dillon suggests that the list of entities that follows the basic distinction in senses of not-being (matter, material entities, etc.) represent additional senses of not-being. Comparison of this text with the others summarized above, however, shows clearly that they are really instantiations of sense (b), i.e. they are all (up to the "not-being prior to being") negations or privations of being.

[31] Of course, according to Proclus' definition the principle of evil must be beyond even absolute not-being.

lute not-being, which for Proclus is the only possible candidate for absolute evil. In a manner similar to that of Plotinus, Proclus distinguishes between intelligible Otherness (as alterity) and the not-being of primary matter (as privation), although the two are related as constituents of the same class of entities that exist intermittently. Proclus' rejection of Plotinus' concept of intelligible matter,[32] however, means that there is no special analogical association between intelligible Otherness and primary matter as there is for Plotinus. Matter's not-being is no different from that of any other constituent of the world of becoming. There can thus be no claim made for its special status as contrary to the Good.

There are other areas of disagreement between the two philosophers as well:

(a) In alluding to *Theaetetus* 176a in I.8.6 Plotinus—rather pointedly, one might say—changes the terminology employed by Plato to describe evil as opposite to the Good, substituting "contrary" (*tounantion*) for Plato's "sub-contrary" (*hupenantion*).[33] Indeed, nowhere in the articulation of his theory of evil does Plotinus mention Plato's term. Proclus, however, not only preserves the original word, but as we have noted, renders it crucial to his explication of the nature of evil's existence and opposition to the Good. The reason for Plotinus' modification of Plato's text is hardly puzzling: that Plato described evil simply as the "sub-contrary" to the good might (erroneously) suggest that he did not believe in the existence of absolute evil. In Proclus' view of the matter, to change the wording in Plato's text is to alter the text's basic meaning. Plato's point was just that evil cannot be complete privation of the Good, since such privation would exist in total independence from the Good and so, because in and of itself privation lacks all power and activity, could in no way be capable of opposing the Good.

(b) Plotinus rejects, while Proclus accepts (*DMS* c. 37 [2.11]), Aristotle's rule that no first principle can be one of a pair of contraries.[34] This is true for Aristotle among other reasons because, if such were the case, then the first principle would share a common species or genus with its contrary. As Proclus points out, we would in that case be

[32] For Proclus critique of Plotinus' theory of intelligible matter, cf. *Th. Pl.* III 9, 39 f.

[33] Cf. O'Meara (1999), 124.

[34] *Meta.* 1075b24 and 1087b1–4. Cf. O'Meara (1999), 129 and Opsomer and Steel (1999[1]), 18 f.

required to assent to two indefensible notions, that (1) there is another principle above the primary Good and (2) there are other existing entities that are homogeneous with the Good. Plotinus' strategy is to accept implicitly the impossibility of the Good taking part in a higher species or genus and to asseverate that, therefore, since there can be no "homogeneity" between "wholes" or universals and their contraries, their opposition is much stronger than that which exists between other contraries that bear some relationship of commonality to each other. But then, as Proclus might well have pointed out, the Good is not one of the "wholes" of which Plotinus speaks in I.8.6. Again, Plotinus' argument does not address the question of the possibility of the contrary of a first principle, but applies solely to the realm of being.

(c) But even in the case of the wholes to which Plotinus refers in I.8.6, Proclus insists, we must recognize the impossibility of contraries.

> But what is not wholly evil, being a sub-contrary to a certain good and not to the whole Good, is ordered and made good by virtue of the preeminence of the good wholes. And it is evil to the former goods to which it is a contrary, but it depends on the latter insofar as they are good. For it is not possible for anything to be a contrary to these wholes, but all things must follow them in accordance with justice or cease to exist altogether [*DMS* c. 9 [2.7]][35]

To repeat Proclus' axiom, the absolute privation of pure being must be complete not-being, a total lack of form rather than an opposite. Once more, Plotinus deprives evil of any sort of existence.

These areas of dispute between the two Neoplatonists suggest a further, more fundamental point of contrast. Both argue, but for very different reasons, that evil remains what it is despite its peculiar participation in the Good. For his part, Plotinus contends that absolute evil is necessarily evil, by which he means that it essentially, not incidentally, lacks the Good. Thus matter/evil exists—and indeed must exist (I.8.6)—solely by virtue of (what Plotinus conceives to be) its opposition to the Good and not by its sharing in it. Plato's doctrine of the impassibility of matter ensures that because matter is privation and thus defined by its deprivation of the Good, it participates in the Good in such a way that

[35] Cf. also *DMS* c. 28.

it is unchanged by it and so preserves its nature as evil.[36] As we have seen, Proclus accepts half of his view. Evil does exist through its opposition to the Good, but gains its power to oppose the Good through the very presence of the Good to it. Evil, therefore, is very much affected by its participation in the Good.[37]

Finally, their respective arguments in defense of Plato's statements in *Theaetetus* 176a that evil is necessary and will not be eradicated further point up the fundamental differences in their treatments of evil. O'Meara has identified three separate arguments supporting Plato's claims in Plotinus' treatise on evil.[38] Proclus accepts some components of these arguments, but on the whole finds Plotinus' formulations of them objectionable.[39] Let us first summarize Plotinus' arguments and then see how Proclus responds to them.

Enn. I.8.3.21–40: Just as beings who are good can only possess their goodness by virtue of a goodness that is absolute, so the *per accidens* existence of unmeasuredness in things must be due to what is in itself unmeasuredness. The same reasoning applies to all of the other characteristics that belong to the nature of evil. Hence, there is absolute evil.

This argument, along with that in I.8.7.17ff., is reproduced by Proclus at *DMS* c. 30. There Proclus states the case of those, like Plotinus, who held that matter is evil, and then, in the immediately following chapters, refutes their theory. Although he does not directly confront either of these Plotinian arguments in his refutation, the basis for Proclus' rejection of I.8.3.21–40 is outlined toward the end of his treatise on evil, where he deals with the question of the "causes" of evil (cc. 49–50). All evil exists *per accidens*, he says, since there is no case of its existence to which we can attribute either a single cause or principle or a determinate end of its coming to be. There is one process of "progression

[36] Cf. III.6, especially .11 and .18–19 and cf. II.4.16.5ff. Plotinus makes clear in this last passage that matter is not evil because of its participation in the Good, but, rather, because it is the very lack of the Good.

[37] Cf. II.4.16.

[38] It might be said that there is a fourth argument in I.8.6 that if the Good exists, its contrary must exist as well.

[39] At *DMS* cc. 5 [2.3], 7 [2.5], and 10 [2.8], as the basis for his theory of evil as privation, Proclus himself lays out a fourth argument: evil must exist if generation is to take place. *Enneads* I.8.7.9f. suggests that Plotinus was aware of such an argument.

towards being" (c. 49), which is coming to be through and for the sake of the Good; the existence of evil must be an aberration of this process. So no distinction can be drawn between accidental and essential unmeasuredness, between unmeasuredness as an attribute of things and unmeasuredness in itself.[40]

Enn. I.8.7.1 ff.: The generation of the cosmos depends on the interplay of contrary principles. So Plato affirms that the nature of the universe came to be necessarily from a mixture of Intellect and Necessity (*Timaeus* 47e5–48a1), the latter understood by Plotinus to be matter. Matter is thus an independent principle, identified by Plato in the *Statesman* myth with the "ancient nature" that is outside God's demiurgic domain. This is absolute evil. That evil will never be eradicated is guaranteed insofar as (1) what is generated can be neither perfect nor immortal, and must therefore contain elements of the nature of evil, and (2) God will not allow the cosmos to be destroyed.[41] As O'Meara notes,[42] Plotinus here implicitly connects Plato's statement of the opposition of intellect to Necessity in *Timaeus* to the assertion in *Theaetetus* 176a that evil must exist as contrary to the Good.

Against this argument Proclus provides direct rebuttal.

> If we speak variously of the lack of measure, limitlessness, and the like—for the possible senses are that it opposes measure, that it is as though its absence and withdrawal, and that it is its substrate and, so to speak, what lacks measure and limit—yet matter is not such as to oppose it or, in general, to do anything, since by its nature it cannot be acted upon because it lacks the power of being acted upon. Nor is it the withdrawal of measure and limit—for it is not the same thing as privation, since when both are present there is no privation, but matter both exists and takes on their image. (*DMS* c. 32 [2.9])
>
> For its (*sc.* matter's) very lack of what is good contributes to the creation of sensible objects, since being not only brings about existing things but also those things that desire participation in being, whose being is in their desire for being. (*DMS* c. 36 [2.10])[43]

Here he argues that the very terminology that Plato employs to refer to matter confirms that he understood the nature of matter to be merely

[40] Cf. O'Meara (1999), 37.
[41] Cf. III.2.5.26 ff., which immediately precedes I.8 on Porphyry's chronological list.
[42] 130 f.
[43] Cf. also c. 34.

the *lack of* rather than the *opposition to* form. He thus adopts the Aristotelian contention that matter is different from privation understood as opposition.[44] And as "mother" of the created universe, matter in fact "seeks out" generation, which is to say that it desires the Good. This last point suggests that Proclus may well have written this section of his treatise as a direct rejoinder to Plotinus. For, although generally content with Plato's use of "Receptacle" and "Nurse" to refer to matter, Plotinus was more than a little uncomfortable with "mother," insofar as this term might imply that his principle of evil somehow nurtures its "offspring," thereby making a positive contribution to the created world (III.6.19). So, Proclus may have thought, Plotinus is again betrayed by Plato's own language, and thus should have found it impossible to maintain, as he does, for example, in II.4.16, that matter remains essentially evil while participating in the Good.[45] Socrates in *Theaetetus* does indeed make it clear that evil necessarily exists as contrary to the Good; however, to insinuate that this is simply a restatement of *Timaeus* 47e5 ff., so that we may substitute Intellect for the Good and Necessity/matter for evil, subverts Plato's expressed intentions.

Enn. I.8.7.17 ff.: Since there must be procession of emanations descending from the Good, there must also be an end to the procession, the terminus of the series possessing nothing of the original principle. This is evil.[46]

Proclus presents a version of this argument in *DMS* cc. 7 and 30 with one crucial deviation from what is found in Plotinus: even the ultimate member of a continuous series of entities which are dependent on a first principle must possess something of that principle within itself. Since there can be only one principle for all beings, therefore not even evil, although the contrary to the Good, can be completely deprived of it. There is, then, no absolute evil.[47]

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[44] Cf. O'Meara (1997), 41 f. on this "anti-Platonic" distinction in Proclus.

[45] Proclus felt that what Plato says in *Philebus*—that matter derives from the One, is divine, participates in god, and so is good—effectively contradicts this thesis: cf. *DMS* cc. 34–35.

[46] At II.9.3.11 ff. he expresses what is implied here, that the process must be continuously unfolding.

[47] On this see O'Meara (1997), 43 f.

But there is a glaring weakness in the argument that evil is determined as a measure of the level of diminution of or distance from the Good, as Plotinus himself makes clear in the following polemic against the Gnostics:

> And once more we must not insist that everyone be good, nor, since this is not possible, should they in turn make offhanded accusations based on their estimation that these matters [here] do not differ from those [above]; nor should they think that evil is nothing but a lacking in wisdom and what is less good and always regressing toward lesser [degrees of good]. As, for example, when someone says that nature is evil because it is not [at the level of] perception, and that the faculty of perception [is evil] because it is not [at the level of] reason. If not, they will be compelled to say that evils exist even there [*sc.* the higher world]. For there also Soul is inferior to Intellect and this [Intellect] to another [*sc.* the One]. [*Enn.* II.9.13.25–35]

If evil is nothing more than a 'lesser good,' then anything other than the Good itself, including all constituents of the intelligible world, contain some portion of it. Such a concept flatly contradicts Platonic theology, according to which Intellect and the undescended soul are entirely free of corrupting influences. Had the unfolding of emanations ceased with these higher beings, Plotinus says elsewhere,[48] evil would never have existed. It is true that Plotinus at times does refer to evil as a "falling short" (*elleipsis*) of the Good, but this *elleipsis* can be evil only if it is somehow determined by the principle of evil, matter, and the reach of matter's corrupting influence over things extends no further than the sensible world.[49] In adopting this argument for his own theory of evil, Proclus, lacking an independent principle of evil upon which to fall back, is hard pressed to deflect the charge that he has implicated his divine order in evil.

Conclusion

Plotinus claimed that the not-being of matter/evil is not of the type that associates with being, but is something still 'more' non-existent. To this claim, at least on its face, Proclus agrees. But, unlike Plotinus,

[48] I.8.2.26–32, where there are references to *Phaedrus* and the 'Platonic' Second Letter.

[49] Cf. O'Meara on III.2.5.25–32: (1997), 44, n. 27. He fails to note this difference between Plotinus' "Ableitungsmodell" and that of Proclus.

who at least attempts to provide a clear account of the not-being of matter/evil through its special relationship with intelligible Otherness, Proclus at times seems at a loss to uncover the precise nature of evil's privation of the Good. His specification of the types of not-being, as (1) absolute not-being which is opposed to being, (2) the not-being that associates with being and exists *per accidens*, and (3) what is above being, would appear to leave no room for the not-being of evil. Of the two categories into which evil might conceivably fall, (1) is expressly and emphatically denied; this leaves (2), evil as not-being that associates with being and exists *per accidens*, yet even this category is problematic. The gist of Proclus' argument is that evil is something more than just privation as lack or negation of being, but less than privation as absolute opposition to the Good. It belongs to the realm of existing things, which would seem to require its inclusion within category (2), yet it is distinguished from such things insofar as it is, in some non-absolute sense, opposition to the Good, and not merely the lack of it: "For the other privations are only absences of states, taking nothing from their own natures for their existence [*sc*. they are non-existent in and of themselves, but exist *per accidens*]; but the Good, due to the excellence of its power, empowers even the privation of itself" (*DMS* c. 7 [2.5]). Thus, evil, in being strengthened by the Good, becomes the qualified opposite or sub-contrary to the Good, and so something more than, for example, the privation of matter. It must then be a unique constituent of category (2): it exists; yet, through its unparalleled relationship with the Good, its existence really falls somewhere between the world of entities that exist intermittently (and whose not-being is just privation as absence of certain states) and that which (hypothetically) is the absolute contrary to the Good, i.e. an independent principle of evil. Perhaps Proclus felt that his treatment of Plato's concept of evil as the sub-contrary to the Good and the formulation of his own idea of evil as a *parhupostasis* sufficed to clarify his meaning, but his analysis of these notions does not fully unravel the confusion. What is most interesting about all of this is that, despite his strong aversion to Plotinus' theory of evil and the arguments he employs to support it, what Proclus is striving to accomplish is in many important respects just what Plotinus himself was aiming for: to arrive at a concept of the nature of evil according to which (a) it exists and exists necessarily, (b) it exists as a special sort of privation that exceeds that which is a mere absence of being, so that it is an opposition to the Good, and (c) nonetheless its opposition to the Good is not so complete that the result is a

dualistic doctrine. Establishing the compatibility of (b) and (c) presented difficulties that neither philosopher adequately resolved. Nonetheless, Proclus determined that the terminology employed in key texts of the dialogues favored his interpretation of Plato at the expense of that of Plotinus, and that Plotinus' modifications of these texts were completely unwarranted and in need of correction.

EVIL AS PRIVATION: THE BODY

Proclus finds all of the manifestations of evil as privation fully delineated in Plato's mythical accounts of creation and of the fall of the soul. These manifestations fall into two categories, those pertaining (a) to the body's evil and (b) to the soul's sinfulness. Plato's texts that are relevant to (a) are primarily located in the stories of creation found in *Timaeus* and *Statesman*, where, embracing a long tradition of interpretation preceding him, Proclus finds embedded a fully developed theory of the nature of evil in both its pre-cosmic and cosmic occurrences. For it is basic to Platonic readings of these myths that what separates the pre-cosmic state of evil from the good of the demiurgic generation is exclusively the lack of order in the former. When Proclus wants to discuss Plato's views on what part or parts of the soul are subject to evil, he turns most frequently either to often-quoted passages in *Timaeus* and *Laws*, to which earlier Platonists appealed for support of their idea that cosmic evil is generated through an errant universal soul, or to *Phaedrus*, finding it necessary to correct an egregious misreading of that important dialogue by some of his predecessors, particularly Plotinus. In what follows we shall investigate each of these categories in detail.

CHAPTER THREE

EVIL AS A DISORDERLY MOTION

Texts

3.1 [*DMS* c. 29, p. 208,1–21] We have spoken about corporeal nature and what evil it possesses, and how this evil differs in different things. Of individual entities those that are in matter have evil also in their essence and are infinite in number; but those that are outside matter are finite in number, and their essence is free of evil, but through their activities and changes their life is filled with the opposite. But of those entities that exist as wholes, some are in order absolutely, since disorder does not exist, while others are in order because disorder has been permanently overcome. All totality belongs to a permanently victorious order, and changelessness is due to order. And when we say that all "discordant and disorderly motion" (*Timaeus* 30a4–5), whatever it is, belongs not only to material bodies, but also to eternal beings, we mean that disorder belongs to the latter differently and not in the same way. Here the disorder is due to matter and the mixture of form with what lacks form, while there the disorder exists as privation, not of form but of life: for the substrate is reason and form. That is why there even what exists as a kind of disorder is order, but order here is disordered in relation to the adornment of the higher order. In generation the disorder is in matter due to the irrational, obscure, and indeterminate aspect of its own nature. For its disorder does not arise by accident and it is not by relation to another thing that it is so-called—for what is such only in relation to something else is not last—, but the disorder of matter is the very lack of measure and self-indeterminateness and self-obscurity.

3.2 [*DMS* c. 34, p. 216,1–28] It will seem as though Plato himself is equally drawn to the two ways of reasoning. When in *Timaeus* he calls matter Mother and Nurse of generation and co-cause of the construction of the world, he clearly considers it to be something good, since he calls the entire world a blessed god and matter a small part

of the world. In the discourse of the Eleatic Stranger he attributes the cause of disorder in the universe to the substrate nature, saying that "the world possesses all its goods from him who forms it," while all things contrary to these goods have origin from an "anterior state" (*Statesman* 273b4–c2). In *Philebus*, however, drawing both matter and the whole nature of the Unlimited from the One and in general placing the divine cause before the separation of the Limited and Unlimited, he admits that matter is divine and good and in no way evil because of its participation in God and its creation from God. He says that "we ought to look for some other causes for evils and not God" (*Republic* 379b6–7), just as he said in other works. So disorder and evil are not due to matter, but to the chaotic and irrational motion: for this is that "corporeal nature" that the Eleatic Stranger calls the cause of disorder in the lowest entities of the universe; but matter is incapable of this, for it is subject to movement, while matter in itself is immobile. Nor is the first composite a body without qualities, for it is visible, as Timaeus says; while what is without qualities is not visible, but takes on the impressions of all the forms and [so produces] a sort of confusion which, because motion is introduced into it, produces disorder. For the vestiges (*ikhnê*) of the different forms leading to one or another kind of movement reveal the whole motion as discordant. This, then, is the anterior state: not capable of being controlled by the forms, it shows itself to be without order and beauty. And in wholes reason dominates, while in composite entities, because of their weakness, it is led to evil, being dominated by an opposite nature, and in a sense becomes irrational because it is ruled by what is worse.

3.3 [*DMS* c. 35, p. 216,1–4] How, then, what opposes nature enters into bodies will become clear a little later. But that evil does not derive from matter and also not [from matter] in bodies is clear from what we have said: for matter and the discordant motion are not the same…

3.4 [*In Tim.* I 283,27 – 284,23] Let us nonetheless recount the marvelous hypotheses of Atticus, who says that that which is in discordant and disorderly motion (*plêmmelôs kai ataktôs kinoumenon*) is ungenerated, but the cosmos is generated in time… Since he himself did not reveal the cause of the generation, let us consider what sort of thing that he says this is. "It is both visible and tangible." Is, then, all of what is sensible generated in time or not all? Surely if it is all, then even that which is in discordant and disorderly motion will be generated in time. For he

says of this also that it is visible. But if it is not all [that is generated in time], then Plato's argument as interpreted by Atticus is illogical and reaches no conclusion, unless he adds that the cosmos is visible and tangible, while that which is in confused and disorderly motion is not now visible, but was before the creation of the cosmos, since even Plato says, "All that was visible was in a discordant and disorderly motion" (30a). For in this context "visible" means "tangible" and "possessing a body." He thus demonstrates that all that *is* visible and tangible, but not that which *was* [visible and tangible], is generated… So that [since this does not follow] even that which is in discordant and disorderly motion is generated, to which we should add that Plato clearly says that it is generated. For [he says,] "Before the creation of the heaven there were three entities, being, place (*khôran*), and genesis," which is constituted in the traces of the forms (*ikhnesin eidôn*). Thus that discordant motion as well is generated, just as it is also visible.

3.5 [*In Tim.* I 325,30 – 328,9] …[I]t will be clear that it cannot be said, as Plutarch and Atticus thought, that the discordance (*to plêmmeles*) that occurred before the cosmos was ungenerated. For if nothing was generated before the heavens came to be, then it would be laughable to investigate whether the cosmos has come into being with respect to what always exists or with respect to what has been generated. But surely this is what he [Plato] is now investigating. Therefore there was something generated even before the cosmos. And since this is not what always exists nor place (*khora*), but there were three entities even before the heavens came into being—being, place, and becoming—it is clear that the *thruloumenon* is this, the discordance. So the All does not come into being alone, but also the discordant and disorderly motion itself, as we said before.

3.6 [*In Tim.* I 328,1–9] …In turn that which "has come to be" is the discordant and disorderly motion. For it is a compound, thoroughly blended, and moved by an external cause, all of which are elements of a generated nature. They [i.e. Plutarch and Atticus] do not therefore say that that [*sc.* the discordant and disorderly motion] is ungenerated and perishable, while the cosmos is generated and imperishable, but that the former also has come into being since it is moved by an external cause and is a mixture. For clearly even Plato will say that these three entities existed before the generation of the heavens, place, becoming, and being, clearly meaning by "becoming" the discordance (*to plêmme-*

les). And this, then, is becoming, and the cosmos is ungenerated with respect to temporal becoming.

3.7 [*In Tim.* I 367,30 – 368,11] The universe is thus everlasting, [368] for the Demiurge is always good. But the universe is not everlasting in its being, but in its everlastingly becoming a universe. The everlastingness of the All, as we said, is dependent upon the goodness of its creator. For the ordering of the All is quite sufficient to reveal the demiurgic power as well. For matter seemed to some to be deprived of divinity (*atheos*) because of its lack of form and shapelessness, and what is "discordant and disorderly" (*to plêmmeles kai atakton*) is divorced from divine Providence. But the All, which has been brought to good order and is magnificent in its beauty, clearly shows the divine creation. This transparent order, then, being the product of the demiurgic cause, exists together with the goodness of the Father.

3.8 [*In Tim.* I 382,20 – 389,1] But they [Porphyry, Iamblichus, and their school] maintain that Plato, wishing to reveal that the Providence that extends from the Demiurge down into the All and the directing power from Intellect and the presence of soul are causes of certain many and so diverse good principles in the cosmos, first investigates the whole corporeal structure (*tên holên sômatoeidê sustasin*) by itself, how it is discordant and disorderly (*plêmmelês kai ataktos*), so that, once you have seen the order that derives from soul and the demiurgic organization in itself, you might be able to distinguish what sort of nature (*phusis*) the corporeal is in itself, as well as what sort of organization it has received from the demiurgic creation, since the cosmos itself exists forever, but our reason separates what comes to be from its creator and brings forward into time things that are undifferentiated, since all of creation is a compound. You might add to what has been said (and rightly said) that there is a twofold demiurgic creation, one productive of bodies (*sômatourgikês*) and the other producing order (*kosmêtikês*), and that Plato, beginning from this creation, hypothesized, in a wholly probable account, all that is corporeal, but in a discordant and disorderly motion; for to the extent that [conceptually] it is as such in itself, it has movement that is as if inspired from nature [*hôs hupo phuseôs empneomenon*], but it is a disorderly motion, and it has not yet become intelligent and animated by the intellective soul, inasmuch as [conceptually] it exists by itself. For whenever the All becomes like this, it then shares in the hyper-physical powers. But if it is in motion in the sense

that it is in motion by nature (*phusei*), but not by Intellect or the intelligent soul from which order emerges, then the motion it produces will be disorderly. A little later he will give us also the corporeal product of the demiurgic Providence. For from it the Demiurge fashions all of what is corporeal, which he says that he took up, "he" being the creator, the fashioner, the artisan, the hand-worker. If, then, he also leads forth the first bodies, it is quite clear that that generation is part of the creation as well, since "the visible" has received certain traces of the forms (*tôn eidôn ikhnê*) that are forerunners of their full articulation (*prodroma tês diarthrôseôs*); when their full articulation is achieved, each thing is brought to complete order and possesses both a position in the All and an order that is fitting. And concerning the confused and disorderly motion (*peri tou plêmmelôs kinoumenou kai ataktôs*) there is not much discussion. For he himself will say expressly that God fashioned within soul all of what is corporeal. That the substrate was not also part of soul, but he brought forth its orderly creation alone, is clear. For he first brought into existence the Essence itself and the Same and the Other, which are as elements from which [soul] exists. If, then, he brought forth both its elements and the mixture of these elements, then he brought forth the whole soul, and he did not take one part of it that already existed and then add something else to it. This is true with respect to the soul that is incorporeal; [384] but with respect to the body we have shown concerning the first forms how God is the cause even of these…[387,5] We must return to the discussion and see how each term is explained. So, then, he makes the whole orderly creation dependent upon the goodness of the Demiurge, which is the same as saying, upon divinity. None of the "all that is first visible" does he allow to be deprived of the god's Providence; and, further, "visible" shows that this is corporeal. For it would not be visible if it were incorporeal and without qualities. And so he is indicating neither [primary] matter nor the secondary substrate, but it is that which already shares in the forms and possesses certain traces (*ikhnê*) and impressions (*emphaseis*) of them and is moved in a confused and disorderly way (*plêmmelôs kai ataktôs kinoumenon*). For the phantasmal and unarticulated (*adiarthrôtoi*) presences of the forms produce divergent movements in it, as even Timaeus himself will say as he continues, and all the orders of the gods before the Demiurge illuminate these presences, while the Paradigm by its very being gives special illumination even before the creation. For the higher causes act even before the secondary ones, and the Demiurge creates with the Paradigm, but the latter [creates] even before the Demiurge, and comes as well to

those things upon which the activity of the demiurgic Providence does not first come. If you wish, then, to distinguish the causes that act first from those that derive from them, you will say that the Good exists as the cause of all things and as the cause of matter…, the Paradigm, however, is not the cause of matter, but of the generation of Forms and of the order in the Forms. And the demiurgic [cause] is the cause of the [cosmic] order. Because, he says, [the demiurgic cause] associated with matter after matter had already entered into participation with Forms. This is the disorder already possessing shape that in a sense is better than what lacks form…[388,5] …the Paradigm received matter from the Good and produced Forms [in it]. For the Forms insofar as they are Forms are the products of the Paradigm. The demiurgic cause then received the Forms from the Paradigm and gave them order by means of numbers and imparted order to them through rational principles. And so if you should distinguish between the causes, you would say that the Demiurge himself is the single cause of all things, but he will create one way in accordance with his own good, another way in accordance with the Paradigm in him, and another way in accordance with the individual requirements of creating and fashioning, as we said. And in sum, as he eternally creates, different things emerge from different elements in him: with respect to the Good [in him], matter, form and cosmic order; with respect to the Paradigm, the form in him; with respect to the special requirements of fashioning, the cosmic order. So that this generation of Forms before the cosmic order takes possession of these impressions of the Forms from the Paradigm, since he is intelligible by his own nature. From this cosmic order the oracles as well bring forth much varied matter: "Thereupon blooms the coming-to-be of much varied matter." For the first matter is not much varied, nor is its coming-to-be, but rather that which possesses traces as forerunners of the forms (*ikhnê prodroma tôn eidôn*). From this it is clear that the Paradigm and the Demiurge differ from each other, especially if matter shares in [the Paradigm] even before cosmic creation, when hypothetically the Demiurge is absent; but when it has been brought to order and arrangement it truly is in possession of the Demiurge, and then the Demiurge is present to it. Thus the phrase "he receives" would be said in some sense also with reference to the paradigmatic cause that is separate from the demiurgic Providence, from which he receives the substrate that is already adorned with certain traces (*ikhnesin*) of the forms…

[See also 389,5–16] …[T]he hypothetical account shows that the phrase "[all that is visible] does not rest, but moves…" refers to the fact that he has given to it [i.e. the visible] nature (*phusis*) alone, from which comes the motion. For what sort of cosmic order could nature, being irrational and not being guided by God, preserve? This is clear also in *Statesman* (272e). For having removed the Demiurge from the cosmos, he says that it is moved by "some Fate and connate desire in it." Hypothesizing that what is there after creation is here before creation, he introduced disorder into the motion of the visible that comes to be without intelligence. And it is the same here.

3.9 [*In Tim.* I 394,22 – 395,10] Matter is therefore not the cause of the disorder (*akosmias*). But certainly neither is the will of God. For he is always good. Therefore the cosmos is always being brought to order and the Demiurge is always bringing order to the discordant and disordered nature (*tên plêmmelê kai atakton phusin*). Why at all, then, did he hypothesize the disorder? Surely if we are to contemplate how the coming-to-be of bodies is one thing, and the order of created bodies is another, we must hypothesize their [first] existence, but in a state of disorderly motion (*kinoumena ataktôs*). For bodies cannot bring themselves to order. Wishing to demonstrate that the order comes to them from outside, he revealed the disorder that existed with their movements outside of a divine cause. But if Aristotle criticizes him [Plato] for stating hypothetically that disorder is established before order, stating that to apply hypotheses to these matters as we do to geometry is not appropriate—for these [hypotheses of geometry] hold true in and of themselves—we must say that it is not in this sense of "hypothetical" that the disorder is said to pre-exist [order] necessarily, but as he himself [i.e. Aristotle] recognizes that what lacks form is prior to the forms, even if it never [actually] exists apart from them, so that which possesses forms, but is still unarticulated (*adiarthrôton*) is conceived [to exist] before the cosmic order, even if it never [actually] existed before the cosmic order, but is brought into existence along with it.

3.10 [*In Tim.* I 404,22–31] [Plato], taking the cosmos, dividing it into parts, and contemplating that which is in a confused and disorderly motion in itself, posits it in concept, just as in *Laws* [895a], wishing to reveal the self-moved cause of all movement, he posited the whole heaven and, having posited it, he makes soul reside in the All, which, in pouring forth much life, animated the cosmos, and in soul

he [introduces] Intellect, which governs the cosmos while reverting to itself; because of it the All moves in a circle; because of it the Whole is brought to order; because of it the entire cosmos is in eternal motion.

3.11 [*In Tim.* I 417,27–32] For [the cosmos] possessed its status as a living being due to what is intelligible [sc. the Paradigm], not due to the discordant and disorderly motion (*to plêmmelôs kai ataktôs kinoumenon*). It is necessary that anything comes to exist in all cases either because of matter or because of form, so that if the cosmos is not a living being due to its substratum [*sc.* matter], then its existence as a living being comes from form. And if it is due to form, then what is primarily the Living Being [sc. the Paradigm] is for it the cause of form.

3.12 [*In Tim.* I 419,26 – 420,2] Now he [Plato] said that the self-living being is the model of the living cosmos, since eternal being was also the model of the disorderly becoming, if it was from that source [*sc.* the Paradigm] that the inarticulate forms (*ta adiarthrôta eidê*) became part of the disorder before the generation of the heavens. But we might conceive of the self-living being, insofar as it possesses the forms of the elements, as also the model of the traces (*ikhnôn*) of the elements, and insofar as it is a living being, as [the model] of this All that is already alive.

3.13 [*In Tim.* II 153,25 – 154,1] [On the various exegeses of Plato's account of the creation of Soul in 35a] …others, understanding the divided Essence as physical and the undivided [Essence] as divine, say that the irrational soul exists before the rational soul, while the divine soul is undivided, and they create the rational soul out of these two Essences, the one as the ordering soul and the other as the substrate soul, as Plutarch and Atticus [claim]; and they say that it [*sc.* Soul] is ungenerated with respect to its substrate, but generated with respect to its form.

3.14 [*In Remp.* I 32,15 – 33,3] For if God is the cause of good things only and every god is the cause of no evil, then it will have been proved as well that there is no Form of evils. For the Form of evils will be a god, since every Form is a god, as Parmenides has said [134c]. If, then, the Form of evils is also a god, but every god is the cause of good things only and of nothing evil, then the Form of evils as well will be the cause

of good things only, and nothing evil. That which is the cause of no evil is not the Paradigm of evils. For the Paradigm is a certain one of the causes. But what is not the Paradigm of evils is not the Form of evils. For every Form is a paradigm. The consequence, then, is that the Form of evils is not this very thing [it is], the form of evils. But if there is a Form of evils, what is the principle that creates while contemplating it? Perhaps you would say that the Form does not create, but something else that looks toward it. If, then, the one possessing it is a god, that is impossible, if God is the cause of none of the evils. But if the creator [creates] one of the evils in this world, but He who knows the Paradigm knows also its image, then the creator will create [*sc*. evil] knowing evil, which is impossible. For all people perform evils through ignorance, as is shown in *Meno*.

3.15 [*In Parm*. IV, 844,11 – 848,20] What is the origin of this (receptivity of the Receptacle) and how does it occur? We should investigate this next. Are we to say that it arises from the paternal and generative cause? For the intelligible Father, whoever at all this is, produced the whole nature that is subordinate to the Demiurge, if we are to trust our account to those who are wise in divine matters, while another who is at once Father and Creator sent reflections down into it. And He who is in turn Creator and Father brought universal order upon this, while the Creator alone filled it up through his particularizing craftsmanship. And from these four causes come, separately, matter before all generation of form and, according to *Timaeus*, a universal Receptacle and shapeless kind, then that which receives the traces (*ikhnê*) of the Forms and is discordant and disorderly (*plêmmeles kai atakton*), then the entire cosmos that comes into existence as a whole in accordance with the universal and single Paradigm, and then (the cosmos) that is filled with all living beings within it and with all the different causes that give rise to all these mortal beings…

[845,25 – 846,1] We thus have these three causes of participation, the one Goodness, the demiurgic power of the Forms, and the receptivity of what receives the illuminations from above. Because participation comes about through these causes, you see how it is possible to liken it to a mirror and its image, because in these things the receptivity and longing for what is above turn out to be the cause of their turning back to those higher realities. But in another manner it is like a seal-ring; since the power of agency in the Forms instills in them the traces of the forms and the visible impressions of the invisible (causes)…

[846,22–33] So much is sufficient concerning these issues. But since we are used to talking about three sorts of participation, that is, impression, reflection, and likeness…, and since it is manifest how these sorts differ from each other, one of those very clever men said that participation takes place by all such manners…

[847,30 – 848,20] Yet perhaps it is preferable and more theological not to distinguish (the sorts of privation) in this way [i.e. to distinguish participation as likeness of the Forms, as reflection of the soul-forms, and as imprint of the forms of nature], but rather to say that sensibles participate in the intellective Forms as present to them, that they receive their reflections, and that they are like them as images. Indeed, Plato in this very passage said simply that the things here "take part in the Forms," as if the first Forms are in all of these ways participated in by the sensibles. There are three intermediate orders of gods, one of the gods within the cosmos, another of those removed (from the cosmos), and another of the leader-gods. Through the order of the cosmic gods things here participate in the Forms in the manner of an impression, since these are the gods who are directly over them; through the separated gods they receive the reflections (of the Forms), since these gods are in some way involved with them and in other ways not, and by means of their transcendent powers they offer to sensibles images of the first Forms; and through the assimilative gods (these are the gods I refer to as the leader-gods) the sensibles are made like the intellectual realities. It is, then, through one demiurgic source and cause that the impression, reflection, and likeness come about, and through its goodness that brings perfection to the wholes.

3.16 [*ap.* John Philoponus, *De aet mun.* 14, 1, pp. 541,6 – 544,1] [Proclus argued that, according to Plato, the cosmos is uncreated.] For when Plato said that the ordered cosmos originated from what is in discordant and disorderly motion (*tou plêmmelôs kai ataktôs kinoumenou*) ("For," he says, "god desired that, so far as possible, all things should be good and nothing evil; wherefore, when He took over all that was visible, seeing that it was not in a state of rest but in a state of discordant and disorderly motion, He brought it into order out of disorder, deeming that the former state is in all ways better than the latter." [Bury trans.]), he never clearly articulates what it was that "was in a state of discordant and disorderly motion;" still, however, saying that matter is formless, while at the same time being the Receptacle and the Nurse of becoming, yet elsewhere the same man hypothesizing and saying that, when-

ever God attempts to create the All, he first gave form and shape to the elements, and before the elements came into being their irrational and measureless traces (*ikhnê alogôs kai ametrôs ekhonta*) pre-existed—in this context Proclus, since he concluded that because of the All what comes to be seems to come into existence from matter, says that matter is what was in a state of discordant and disorderly motion, from which God is said by Plato to have created the ordered [cosmos]. Then, since Plato hypothesized that matter is entirely formless, and, because formless, it is completely motionless and so not able in any way to be moved in a discordant and disorderly manner (for what is truly in motion, even if it is moving discordantly, necessarily has some form), for this reason he says that matter, being not entirely formless, is moved in a discordant and disorderly manner (for in itself it is entirely motionless), but has not been given complete form (for entities that possess complete forms are not still moved in a discordant and disorderly manner), but he says that the future state of formation, having received the so-called traces, which are the indistinct forerunners [*prodroma*] of the complete forms, and having been given a shadow-sketch [*skiagraphetheisan*] [*sc*. of form] through them, is moved in a discordant and disorderly manner, just as someone might consider embryos that do not yet have articulate form but still have undefined outlines of formation. In this way he says that matter is moved insofar as it has already received the traces of the forms [*ta ikhnê tôn eidôn*], but in a discordant and disorderly manner; and what is moved is the incomplete and inarticulate stage of the formation. For if the state of disorder is contrary to the state of order and what is incomplete and inarticulate to what is complete and articulate, and if the complete forms are the causes of ordered motion, then as well what are the inarticulate, incomplete, and, as it were, the traces of the complete [forms] will be the causes of the disorderly motion. So Proclus, having accepted these hypotheses and having shown even before this, at the beginning of his argument, that the Demiurge and Craftsman of the cosmos created matter itself, because every craftsman prepares for himself the appropriate matter, and that the Demiurge of matter himself brought into existence in it the traces that are the precursors of the forms, from which matter takes on a discordant and disorderly motion, he thereupon concludes that these events cannot be distinguished temporally—such that formless matter was brought into existence first, then, next in order, the traces of the forms were placed in it, and thirdly the disorder is arranged and ordered—unless, he says, one separates them from each other in concept. Thus, since it has been

shown that contemplating each of these [stages] individually and by itself is absurd (for matter was not at any time without form nor did disorder precede order), it is absolutely necessary that all of these stages exist at the same time: matter, the traces of the forms, the complete forms themselves. At the moment of its existence matter is ready to receive the traces of the forms, since it is the Receptacle of becoming and has its being in this; and these traces of the forms come to be together with it and at the same time as it comes into existence and immediately the order and complete forms come to be with them…

3.17 [*ap.* John Philoponus, *De aet mun.* 14, 539,1 – 540,17] …If, then, the Craftsman of the All himself created matter as the Receptacle of becoming, then either he himself also brought into existence the traces of the forms [*ta ikhnê tôn eidôn*], from which [matter] comes to have a discordant and disorderly motion although being in itself motionless and entirely formless, or we shall say that these things come into matter otherwise, from another being who is intelligible and himself a god. If, then, he himself is the cause of these traces, how is it not quite improper that he makes matter receptive to being the Receptacle of becoming, while bestowing those things from which it would not be receptive, but rather unreceptive to the advent of becoming? For disorder militates against order. But the Receptacle of becoming does not militate against the ordered becoming. If, on the other hand, there is some other god responsible for the traces, how is it not unreasonable [to suppose] that he [*sc.* the Demiurge] made [matter] receptive, but that [*sc.* the other god] made it unreceptive; that he [*sc.* the Demiurge] allowed [matter], which he made receptive, to become at first unreceptive, in order that he might subsequently create the conditions for making matter receptive, as though it were not possible for there to exist the receptivity to complete [*sc.* the cosmos] without [first] there having existed the lack of receptivity. If he made it receptive to receiving only the traces of the forms in themselves, it would be absurd (for he shall then have made coming-to-be receptive to being disorderly), while if he [made] coming-to-be [receptive] to being ordered, how, since it is possible, at the same time that he renders it receptive, that he bring about such a coming-to-be, did he allow the other coming-to-be to come about, so that he might impose order upon disorder, as though he could not bring about order without disorder? If these possibilities are indeed absurd and the traces of the forms are not antecedent to the order imposed on them, but the substratum along with the traces is ungenerated, then the order

imposed on them [*sc.* the traces of the forms] is also ungenerated and is not something [that exists] before or after them… The order [*taxis*] is therefore ungenerated and imperishable, and is not first or second or third of the three elements, except in concept only. So, leaving aside the conceptual distinction, they all exist together: matter, the traces, and the order. The cause of the order is also the cause of the cosmos, so that it would be ungenerated and imperishable.

Analysis

We begin with the evil that affects the body. We should call attention at the outset to those sections of *DMS* where Proclus places strong emphasis on the natural differences between the evils of the soul and those of the body.[1] Applying the principle that the greater the good, the greater the evil of its contrary, he establishes that, in general, psychic evils surpass in degree bodily evil (c. 39).[2] Correspondingly, evils in the soul are to be distinguished—and ranked—according to whether they are privations of essence, potency, or activity. And we have already had occasion to see that, to complicate matters further, each of these three psychic evils is sub-divided into two kinds, being either baseness (*turpitudo*), which is "ignorance and privation of intelligence," or sickness (*egritudo*), described as "dissension in the soul and a deficiency of the life according to reason" (c. 56).

Evils of the body, on the other hand, are in all instances privations of nature resulting both from the mixture in them of dissimilar elements and from what he calls "contrary form-principles."[3] These form-principles are evidently the same as those forms associated with matter that in c. 48 he lists, with "certain souls," as one of the "efficient"

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[1] cc. 49, 56, and 60. Cf. *In Tim.* I 380,24ff.; *De dec. dub.* c. 27. At *Th. Pl.* I 18, p. 86 he refers to two divine orders which act separately as "purifiers" of the wickedness of souls and bodies. This idea he evidently borrowed from Plato (*Rep.* 609e ff.).

[2] See *DMS* c. 39 for the exception to this rule. Bodily evil results ultimately in not-being, while evil in the soul ends in an "evil existence," that is, privation of good, and to be evil is worse than not to exist at all. This fact is further proof that matter is not primary evil, since the body, which is the lesser evil, is closer in being to matter than is soul.

[3] *DMS* c. 49; cf. also *De dec. dub.* c. 27. At *DMS* c. 57 he lists as the "measures of beings" nature, soul, and intellect and defines the lack of measure in each as the privation of their forming principles. Of course, bodies oppose nature only with respect to their being manifold, not as wholes: c. 60.

causes of evil. In cc. 28–29 [cf. 3.1] he identifies this power to oppose the proper functioning of the corporeal nature with a disorder (*inordinatio*) or discordant and disorderly motion (*fluctuose et inordinate motum*), but there the responsibility for the disorder seems to be shared by both matter and the forms-in-matter. Yet clearly matter's disorder cannot be any sort of potency since it consists of the "irrational, obscure, and indeterminate aspect of its own nature," and is attributed to its very "lack of measure."[4] And at c. 34 [3.2] the bodily disorder and evil are said to reside not in matter, but in the "chaotic and irrational motion" of the "corporeal nature" (*corporeum*), a term taken from the myth in Plato's *Statesman*. This chaotic "corporeal nature" is what Plato calls there the "anterior state" (*emprosthen hexis*) of all things before the imposition of order in the creation of the cosmos. In the generated cosmos it is preserved as the underlying nature of everything, having retained its disorderly motion, although it is mastered by the ordering power of God. By the "corporeal nature" Plato cannot mean matter, Proclus insists, if matter is in itself without movement and qualities.[5] Rather, what Plato has in mind is a sort of proto-body that is visible (*visibile*), but certainly not a fully formed entity, because he says that it comes to be as the product of the mere "traces" (*vestigia*) of the forms that are impressed on matter and introduce a confused and disorderly motion that they cannot control.[6] In composite entities this disorder can, due to the weakness of these entities, cause their activities and functions to become irrational. Such is the source of every natural body's evil: a pre-cosmic quasi-body that is produced from the mixture of matter with the vestiges of the forms and that in the process is set in an irrational, chaotic motion.

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[4] *DMS* c. 29 [3.1]. Later in the same treatise (c. 34 [3.2]), as well as elsewhere (see below), he ascribes the motion exclusively to the trace-forms. As we shall see, this apparent inconsistency is not uncommon among Platonists of all periods.

[5] Cf. Hager (1962), 100f.

[6] So also Plato identifies this corporeal nature with the Unlimited of his *Philebus*, ranking it above matter insofar as it is corporeal and so possesses qualities (*DMS* c. 35). Proclus evidently drew this concept from the commentaries of Porphyry and Iamblichus. At *In Tim.* I 382,20ff. [3.8] (= Frg. 37 Dillon) he attributes to them the view that Plato, attempting to elucidate the ordering influence of Providence, mind, and soul in the universe, logically distinguished the "whole corporeal structure" (*tên holên sômatoeidê sustasin*) in itself, insofar as it is "discordant and disorderly" (*plêmmelês kai ataktos*), from the order and arrangement that comes from the higher principles.

Divergent Readings

This interpretation of Plato,[7] in its general outline somewhat of a commonplace in ancient Platonism[8] and in certain of its aspects closely following the exegeses of both Porphyry and Iamblichus, contradicts a number of earlier theories of evil in its conclusions that the origin of evil cannot be traced to matter, to natural bodies, or to the soul, all of which are creations of God.[9] Proclus' disagreement with earlier Platonists on this matter stemmed principally from their divergent readings of the two central Platonic myths in *Timaeus* and *Statesman*. At *Timaeus* 52d1–53b9, Plato describes the pre-cosmic chaos to which God brings order in the creation of the universe.[10] Before the process of creation begins, the adumbrations of the elements—Plato calls them mere "traces" (*ikhnê*) of themselves and his commentators thereby regarded them as traces of the *forms* of the elements (or trace-forms)—, which already possess motion, are brought into contact with the "Nurse of becoming", which later Platonists rather naturally took to be a reference to Aristotle's primary matter. Matter, then, "receives" the elements and is shaken and disturbed by them; but it also reciprocates, in turn imparting its inherent instability to the trace-forms. This mixture and its resulting disturbance Platonists identified with the disorderly motion described earlier in 30a as a pre-cosmic chaos:

> For God desired that, so far as possible, all things should be good and nothing evil; wherefore, when He took over all that was visible, seeing that it was not in a state of rest but in a state of discordant and disorderly motion (*pan hoson ên horaton paralabôn oukh hêsukhian agon alla kinoumenon plêmmelôs kai ataktôs*), He brought it into order out of disorder, deeming that the former state is in all ways better than the latter. [1–6] [Bury translation]]

It is significant for later interpretations of these passages that in the pre-cosmic chaos the trace-forms of the elements, insofar as they are not fully articulated but are mere traces of their subsequently complete natures in the generated cosmos, are characterized as being completely without any semblance of divine order. In the Platonic tradition the

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[7] For an overview of this concept, see Deuse (1983), 236 ff.

[8] We find the same idea, for example, in Timaeus Locrus (206,3 f.), who distinguishes between matter in itself and a "second" matter in bodies that are already informed but may receive further form. Cf. Baltes (1972), 41 f.

[9] Cf. *DMS* c. 35 and *In Tim.* I 375,20 – 376,4.

[10] For modern interpretations of this passage, see De Vogel (1986), 211 f.

product of the mixture of matter and the trace-forms is then identified with the pre-cosmic "corporeal nature" (*to sômatoeides*) which in the *Statesman* myth is described as "sharing in the great disorder" that marked the "ancient nature" before creation. For Platonists like Proclus, then, this corporeal state cannot be construed as mere matter, but must be matter that is already imperfectly informed, and the evil of the resulting disorder is to be seen as nothing more than this very imperfection of rational structure that is enhanced by matter's own nature as defect.

Presentations of or allusions to his interpretation of these passages are found throughout Proclus' surviving works.[11] The most informative summary of his views, however, is given by John Philoponus.[12] In Philoponus' account, Proclus is said to have acknowledged that, because all things originate from matter, Plato can only be referring to it when in *Timaeus* he speaks of a pre-existent disorderly motion. But Platonic matter is necessarily motionless if it is completely without form and if the existence of all types of motion requires that the entity in motion have some form. So if Plato's reference is to matter, it must be matter not in and of itself, but containing some form, although not complete form, for the presence of the latter could only produce a rational motion. Thus when Plato speaks of the "vestiges" (*ikhnê*) of the elements he is describing what are indistinct "precursors" (*prodroma*) to and "shadow-sketches" (cf. *skiagraphetheisan*) of the full forms that, before the creation of the cosmos, combine with matter to generate a chaotic motion. The efficient causes of the movement of matter must therefore be these imperfect and inarticulate forms. Furthermore, Proclus argued, if we are to understand the Demiurge as creating matter, causing the inarticulate forms to exist in it, and imposing order on the resulting disorder, then we must also regard these three actions as events that are distinguishable only conceptually, not temporally. For matter was never entirely without form nor did a state of disorder precede the ordered

[11] See, for example, *In Tim.* III 273,36, where Proclus notes that the disorderly motion, which he says is also acknowledged in the Chaldaean Oracles, is equivalent to the "inherent desire" of the *Statesman* myth.

[12] *De aet. mundi* 14, pp. 542,6ff. [3.16]. For an excellent analysis of Proclus' argument here, see de Haas (1997), 14ff. There are some striking parallels in vocabulary and thought between what Philoponus reports of Proclus' theory here and what Plotinus says concerning the productive activity of the World Soul in *Enneads* VI.7.7.8ff.; another parallel is II.9.12.21ff., where Plotinus, like Proclus, connects the impression of a "preliminary sketch" of the entire living being on the menstrual fluid with the formation of embryos. On VI.7.7, see below.

cosmos. So before the cosmic generation matter, the vestiges of the forms and the perfect forms pre-existed eternally together, all under the direction of God.

Philoponus leaves little doubt that Proclus' exegesis is in large part a rebuke of those who had argued that Plato viewed these moments of pre-creation as discrete temporal events, so that a state of disorder did indeed antedate the ordered world.[13] His most prominent targets[14] were, of course, Plutarch and Atticus, both of whom had maintained that Plato's creation occurred in time and that the disorderly motion is to be identified with the agency of an evil World Soul.[15] The self-motion of the primal soul, before its association with matter, is inherently disorderly, but Plutarch, like Proclus, took Plato's chaotically moving *horaton* to be a proto-body produced when this soul caused matter and the four elements to agitate one another.[16] So, although as adamant as Proclus in their insistence that matter itself could not be the source of the pre-cosmic chaos, they committed what to him and most other Platonists was the irredeemable error of maintaining that the evil of the corporeal world derives exclusively from the activity of a primordial soul.

In his commentary on *Timaeus* Proclus gives the most complete extant version of his interpretation of Plato's disorderly motion expressly as a means of repudiating this dualistic interpretation, and in so doing reveals his indebtedness to earlier expressions of opposition from both Porphyry and Iamblichus.[17] He begins by recalling that these ear-

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[13] Cf. 14,2, p. 545,14–24. Philoponus agreed with Proclus on this point. Cf. *De. an. procr* 1016D, p. 153,15–22 for Plutarch's expression of this view, and see de Haas (1997), 14ff. for the positions of others. As we see elsewhere, this exegesis is also meant as a response to Aristotle's criticism of Plato. At *In Tim.* I 395,1ff. [3.9] Proclus answers Aristotle's critique of Plato's concept of the pre-cosmic chaotic state (*to akosmon*) by reminding us that Aristotle himself had recognized that formlessness conceptually precedes the forms, even if the former never actually exists apart from the latter. See the Introduction.

[14] His arguments are directed against others as well, both those who blame the Demiurge for evil and those who remove him from creation below the divine level.

[15] Proclus' statement in *DMS.* c. 10 that there can be no "disordered and unmixed" evil is also an oblique reference to the dualists.

[16] *akosmia d' ouk asômatos oud' akinêtos oud' apsukhos all' amorphon men kai asustaton to sômatikon emplékton de kai alogon to kinêtikon ekhousa* (1014B, p. 148,14–17). Cf. *De an. procr.* 1016D, p. 153,17–22. At *De Is. et Os.* 373BC this state of disorder (*akosmia*) is called an imperfect proto-creation and an image (*eidolon*) and outline (*phantasma*) of the world about to be generated. See Hager (1962), 80; Matter (1964), 184ff.; Hershbell (1987), 240.

[17] *In Tim.* I 383ff. [3.8]. Proclus reveals at the beginning of this long analysis that his

lier Platonists had appealed to *Timaeus* 30a and *Laws* 896a ff. in support of their argument for the pre-existence of both matter in disorderly motion and an evil World Soul that caused this motion. For what could be the source of matter's motion other than a soul, the cause of all movement? And if matter's motion is disorderly and irrational, then so is the World Soul. It is to this World Soul and the motion that it occasions that the Demiurge brings order.[18] The objections of Porphyry and Iamblichus apparently centered on the controversial ideas of Plutarch and Atticus, which they considered to be not just logically inconsistent, but even impious, that matter is ungenerated,[19] that the creation of the cosmos is a temporal event,[20] that a pre-cosmic disorder temporally preceded the order imposed upon the created cosmos by God, and that the agent of this disorder is an evil World Soul that exists as a principle independent of God, so that there is a separate cause of the disorderly motion, and so of evil.[21] Against the last notion both Neoplatonists, and Proclus with them, explained that Plato was drawing a purely hypothetical distinction between the creation of bodies and the process by which they are brought to order as a means of highlighting god's Providence and the essential goodness of all aspects of creation. Moreover, there is Plato's concern for doctrinal consistency: this hypothetical distinction is further designed to emphasize that, since bodies cannot impose rational movement on themselves, the order that comes to them must derive from an external source.[22] In this light Proclus finds in Plato's

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chief concern is to demonstrate that bodily evil originates neither in matter itself nor in some pre-existing state of soul. To prove the latter claim, he must confront in detail the theories of Plutarch and Atticus.

[18] Cf. *In Tim.* I 381,22 ff.

[19] On the impiety of their views, cf. *In Tim.* I 382,17. That matter is generated by God is demonstrated at 384,1 ff. Having dispensed with the idea of an evil World Soul independent of divine creation, Proclus must now account for matter. Is matter uncreated, as Plutarch and Atticus say (384,3–4)? Again, Plato's texts are unequivocal: the Demiurge brings matter into existence, and not from some pre-existent order (384,21–24, with reference to *Tim.* 52d).

[20] Proclus reproduces Porphyry's argument against Atticus' proof of a temporal creation at *in Tim.* I 366,27 ff. and 391,4 ff. In his reference to those who believed that matter in its formlessness is "godless" and that the disorderly motion is outside of divine Providence, he may have in mind not only Plutarch and Atticus, but also (at least as far as the first claim is concerned) Plotinus.

[21] They also inveigh against separate ideas in Atticus that the Demiurge is not to be distinguished from the Ideas/Model (391,4 ff., from Porphyry) and that order comes through the receptivity of matter (392,7 ff.: see below).

[22] Cf. *In Tim.* I 394,9 ff.

account of the demiurgic creation a conceptual differentiation between a corporeal (*sômatourgikê*) and an ordering (*kosmêtikê*) generation.[23] In his hypothetical account creation begins with corporeal generation from which comes "all of the corporeal" (*pan to sômatikon*) possessing inherent motion due to the "inspiration" of irrational nature (*kinêsin men ekhon hôs hupo phuseôs empneomenon*). This "corporeal" as yet has no participation either in intellect or in soul, the agents of order, and so its motion is necessarily disorderly. The work of the Demiurge, bringing order to the disorder and creating the first complete bodies, comes later (cf. *Timaeus* 31b); thus what Plato describes in *Timaeus* 30a and 53b, that the "visible" receives the vestiges of the forms which are the precedents of their full articulation[24] under the direction of the Demiurge, is to be considered part of the demiurgic creation that is antecedent to the activity of the Demiurge himself.[25]

The Primal Soul, the Demiurge, and Disorder

The careful circumscription of the role of the Demiurge in creation by these later Neoplatonists is part of an ongoing debate among Platonists regarding his nature and functions. Proclus' defense of his own position, that Plato's Demiurge is directly involved in the constitution of the physical world, yet is not responsible for its evil, is no doubt designed at least in part as a response to his predecessors.[26] Plutarch, for example, had regarded his evil World Soul as a second Demiurge whose chaotic creation is antecedent to that of the architect of the physical world, and it is possible that Numenius argued similarly.[27] Proclus, following

[23] Cf. Baltes (1978), 151 ff. and Deuse (1983), 243.

[24] *Tou horatou dexamenou tina tôn eidôn ikhnê prodroma tês diarthrôseôs autôn* (*In Tim.* 383,19–20 [3.8]).

[25] Following accepted Platonic exegesis, Proclus (375,6 ff. and 389,5 ff.) points to the myth in Plato's *Politicus* as proof (a) that it is conceptually possible that a pre-cosmic movement preceded the Demiurge's creation, (b) that those who blame the Demiurge for allowing evil to exist are mistaken, and (c) that no god can cause evil.

[26] Proclus rejects the two extreme positions on the issue of the possible involvement of the Demiurge in the generation of evil, offering arguments against both those who blamed the Demiurge for the world's evil (*In Tim.* I 375,6 ff.) and others who, in order to absolve him of such blame, limit his activity to the divine realm and so remove him from responsibility for anything that occurs below that stratum (Cf. *In Tim.* I 372,22 ff.).

[27] Numenius' soul of matter creates bodies and is the source of the irrational human soul, both of which activities are essential functions of Plutarch's primal soul. Alcinous, whose pre-cosmic World Soul resembles that of Plutarch, may well have argued along

Porphyry, also criticizes Atticus and his followers for illegitimately conflating the activities of the Demiurge and the Paradigm.[28]

There is another, implied criticism of the dualists that is worth mentioning here. It is noteworthy that in Plutarch's account of creation Plato's trace-forms play a distinctively minor role.[29] He mentions *Timaeus* 52d ff. principally in order to explain how bodies are formed. The pre-cosmic elements are "substrate bodies" that possess being of a sort and are traces (*ikhnê*) of themselves in their fullness. They are thus part of what makes the pre-cosmic creation an image (*eidôlon*, *phantasma*) of the cosmos that is to come.[30] He acknowledges the reciprocal *seismoi* caused by these elements and matter in mixture, but leaves little doubt that the cause of these disturbances is the primal soul.[31] That he regarded the *ikhnê* as proto-forms is indicated by a statement he makes in his treatise on the creation of the soul in *Timaeus*: "[the primal soul] distributes here [*sc.* the pre-cosmic image of the created cosmos] the images from there [*sc.* the divine realm]."[32] These images that come from above can only be the traces of the elements, and so Plutarch is in concord with most Platonists in interpreting the *ikhnê* as images of the divine forms. But there are two rather obvious problems with this interpretation. In the first place, there is the apparent impossibility of explaining how an irrational and evil World Soul, if it is truly an independent principle of chaos opposing the Good, could in any way perform a task that, no matter how imperfectly, promotes the transformation from disorder to order. And secondly, if any Platonist is to say that the pre-cosmic chaos is an "image" of the rational world, he must mean that the chaos in some sense participates or has a share in divine reason. Yet the chaos is the very privation of rationality.[33] Indeed, the

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the same lines; cf. *Didask.* 14.3. On his treatment of Plato's disorderly motion, cf. Alt (1993), 46f. We might note also Proclus' discussion of Iamblichus' critique of Amelius on the issue of multiple Demiurges at *In Tim.* I 398,16ff. See also 361,27ff.

[28] *In Tim.* I 391,4–12. Cf. 431,14ff. for Atticus' theory.

[29] It is not by coincidence that the trace-forms do not figure into Numenius' cosmogony, either.

[30] *De Is. et Os.* 373BC.

[31] There is, however, the interesting statement made in *De fac.* (12, 926D–927A) that before the traces of the elements combined with matter, they had "private and self-willed movements."

[32] *diadousan entautha tas ekeithen eikonas* (1024C, p. 159,26). On this passage, cf. Ferrari (1995), 92ff., who also connects these "images" with the traces of *Timaeus* 52bff.

[33] It is odd that Plutarch sees the chaos as part of the irrational soul's nature as a

first imposition of form would necessarily have come at the beginning of cosmic creation and been carried out either by the rational Demiurge and the gods below him, or by some other divine agent of the Good.

It likely occurred to the Neoplatonists, then, that their predecessors, particularly their dualist opponents, lacked a plausible means of providing a cause for the "earlier" introduction of trace-forms into matter, and so could not offer an adequate account of the obvious connection between the disorderly motion of *Timaeus* 30a and the combination of matter with the trace-forms in 52d ff. On the contrary, the Neoplatonic Plato preserved a strict, although purely hypothetical, division between the Demiurge and the Paradigm, at least in part to demonstrate more clearly that creation was the process of bringing a conceptually antecedent chaos to order. If both phases of creation come under the purview of Providence, then the Paradigm can be the model for both the pre-cosmic trace-forms that combine with matter to produce the disorderly motion and the generated cosmos as a whole.[34]

The Plato of the Neoplatonists thus believed that soul as well is completely absent from the pre-cosmic, corporeal creation, its first activity coming during the ordering phase of demiurgic generation.[35] Against Plutarch and Atticus, therefore, the Neoplatonists take Plato to mean that the process of fashioning order from disorder is not one in which a pre-existing, evil World Soul is made rational by a divine creator. God created the entire World Soul rather than merely adding order and reason to a primordial soul.[36] As we shall see in more detail later, the concept of a soul that is both evil in its essence and the source of cosmic evil is thus alien to Platonic cosmogony.

But if Proclus' purpose in his analysis here is principally polemical, then refuting Plutarch and Atticus was not his sole concern. For, despite their unorthodox and sometimes contradictory views regarding the role of the World Soul in the generation of evil, they were in full agreement with Proclus and most other Platonists that neither matter nor fully

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being that is intermediate between the higher and lower worlds, since it is, rather, the rational World Soul, created from this primal soul and the undivided essence, that is properly such an intermediate being.

[34] Cf. *In Tim.* I 419,26ff. [3.12].

[35] Cf. *In Tim.* I 383,19ff. [3.8] and also 394,9f.

[36] *In Tim.* I 383,22f. [3.8].

formed bodies could in any way be responsible.[37] Indeed, there can be no doubt that, if Proclus has other opponents in mind in his exegesis, almost certainly among them were included fellow Neoplatonists. It is to these other competing theories that we now turn.

Matter as the Principle of Corporeal Evil: Numenius and Plotinus

1. Numenius

In the Platonic tradition the two most important supporters of the view that matter is the principle of evil are Numenius and Plotinus. This fact is in itself becomes interesting when we consider that Plotinus was as staunch an opponent of dualism as the Neoplatonists who follow him. It should come as no surprise, then, that their conceptions of the nature of matter, and so of the nature of evil, are in most respects in direct conflict with one another.

We would expect that in Numenius' estimation matter with its evil soul, as the source of all evil, must be the source as well of the pre-cosmic disorderly motion, and this is confirmed by Calcidius (*In Tim.* cc. 297 and 300).[38] In fact, according to Calcidius Numenius' famous doctrine that matter possesses a soul derives from his reading of Plato, that the disorderly motion stems from matter, which must therefore have its own source of motion, i.e. a soul. He thus rebuts Aristotle's criticism of Plato, that if matter is the seat of the disorderly motion then the motion cannot be inherent. Furthermore, creation is not *ex nihilo*, but rather the transformation into rational order of a pre-existing chaos caused by ensouled matter.

> …nor did God create the world from what did not exist, but he brought to order those things that were without order and measure. Thus to bring order to what exists is better than to create out of nothing, for with the imposition of Intellect he reduced the wanderings and flux-like agitation of mind from disordered shaking (*iactatione*) to order, and, with a beneficial (*salubri*) and measured shaking, brought under control the unstable motion of body and gave it form, proper shape, and fitting embellishment (*ornatum*)… (c. 31, pp. 80,21 – 81,6)

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[37] Plutarch expressly distinguished the pre-cosmic *sôma* from a natural body (*De an. procr.* 1016E, p. 154,1 ff.). Atticus almost certainly followed suit.

[38] On Numenius, see Schröder (1916), 63 ff.; Hager (1962), 84; Baltes (1975), 256; Frede (1987), 1053; Alt (1993), 32 f., 36 ff., 89, and 101 ff. That Calcidius' c. 31 derives from Numenius is, I feel, fairly certain; cf. Phillips (2003).

Insofar as he construes Plato's account of creation to be the imposition of order on a pre-existing chaos, Numenius follows accepted Platonic practice.[39] But it is a strongly dualistic account of generation, for the *anima stirpea* that here is said to engender the disorderly motion is the pre-existent primal soul of matter; and so we see two independent and active principles of creation that work in opposition to each other.[40] And there is another feature of Numenius' interpretation that further highlights its dualistic nature: creation involves two (at least conceptually) distinct phases, the imposition of order on the *errores* and *agitatio* of the *animus* through the addition of intellect (*intellectus*) and the harnessing of the irrational motion of body (*corpus*) through the addition of form and shape (*formam et figuram*). This differentiation has no parallel in Plato and was perhaps borrowed from Plutarch, Atticus, or one or another of their followers. For Proclus mentions the same unorthodox reading of the dialogues in their doctrine of creation:

> It is said in *Laws* [897b] that the good soul "governs rightly and wisely," while the evil (*kakergetis*) soul is moved in a disorderly way and causes an irrational disturbance in what is inhabited by it. But in the act of creation by the Demiurge, matter is transformed through the constitution of the cosmos, while the evil soul, by sharing in intellect (*nous*), is made rational and its motion rendered ordered. For participation in form induces order in the former, while for the latter it is the presence of intellect. (*In Tim.* I 382,4–12 = Atticus frg. 23)[41]

The similarities are obvious:

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[39] According to Calcidius (*In Tim.* c. 295), Numenius' interpretation of Plato was part of his effort to refute the doctrines of other Pythagoreans as well as of the Stoics. His view that the Dyad/matter is undetermined and limitless is said to be an answer to that of the Stoics, that matter is by nature determined and limited, since what is limitless by nature cannot be transformed to orderliness and measuredness. It would seem, then, that the Stoics, at least as Numenius understood them, did not accept the orthodox Platonic idea that creation is, ultimately, the process of bringing order to disorder—and understandably so, given their idea that God permeates the cosmos as far as matter.

[40] At c. 29 this *anima stirpea* is the irrational divided Essence of *Timaeus* 35a which, with the higher, undivided Soul, forms the rational soul of the world.

[41] See also Plutarch *De an. procr.* 1026DE, p. 165,3–5: *to gar pathêtikon anadidôsin ex heautês hê psukhê, tou de nou meteskhen apo tês kreittonos arkhês engenomenou.* On the Proclus passage cf. Baltes, (1983), 44ff.

Numenius	Plutarch and Atticus
…inordinatos quippe animi errores et agitationem fluctibus similem intellectu assignato ex inordinata iactatione ad ordinem redegisse…	τὴν δὲ κακεργέτιν ⟨ψυχὴν⟩ νοῦ μετασχοῦσαν ἔμφρονα ἀποτελεῖσθαι καὶ τεταγμένην ποιεῖσθαι κίνησιν
…corporis etiam motum instabilem salubri moderataque agitatione frenasse et eidem formam et figuram congruam et convenientem ornatum dedisse…	ἐπιγενομένης δὲ τῆς ἀπὸ τοῦ δημιουργοῦ κοσμοποιίας τὴν μὲν ὕλην μεθίστασθαι πρὸς τὴν τοῦ κόσμου σύστασιν

It is not difficult to understand the perceived need for such a division of moments of creation. One of the basic tenets of the cosmogonies of Plutarch and Atticus is that there are three principles of creation, God, matter, and the evil World Soul. So when the Demiurge began the task of bringing order to disorder, he confronted two *arkhai* within the mixture that is the irrationally moving *sômatikon*, that of body (matter) and that of soul.[42] In the case of Numenius, as the passage above reveals, although he identified the evil soul with matter, the Demiurge directs his activity separately toward the two, still conceptually independent principles that make it up. Thus, just as each component of the precosmic state, whether that be conceived as a proto-body or as ensouled matter, gives something of its own nature to the disorderly motion, so each must undergo its own transformation to order and harmony. In this way we come to see as well that in the generated world both bodies and souls preserve elements of their original natures that are in continuing and incorrigible opposition to the 'good' elements that are imposed upon them from without.[43]

We should call attention to another important feature of Numenius' exegesis that sets it apart from most other Platonist accounts: by making matter's motion inherent to it, Numenius has no need to posit an intermediate proto-body in which to locate the disorderly motion. The concept of the "nature of bodies" that we find in other interpretations follows naturally from the view that matter in and of itself is completely passive and without qualities or attributes. Motion must come to it from outside, and what is formed from the blending of matter with this external source of motion is something intermediate between primary matter and fully-formed bodies. Numenius does away with this

[42] See, e.g., Plutarch, *De an. procr.* 1014C, p. 148,21–28.

[43] For Numenius matter (*sc.* the soul of matter) is the "maker and protector" of the irrational part of the soul (Calcidius, *In Tim.* c. 297).

intermediate stage of creation by collapsing it into his concept of matter. We should not be surprised, then, that in the surviving fragments of Numenius' works there is no reference or allusion to *Timaeus* 52ff., the *locus classicus* for accounts of the formation of the nature of bodies. It is significant that Numenius apparently agreed with the Stoics and most other Platonists that matter *per se* is shapeless and without quality, yet at the same time claimed that it possesses a soul that can actively oppose divine Providence. He clearly believed that, although an evil soul is part of the nature of matter, a conceptual distinction can be made between them. Thus he could preserve the compatibility of the Aristotelian idea of primary matter with the Platonic idea of matter as at least quasi-active and chaotic.

2. Plotinus

Characteristically, Plotinus does not discuss this aspect of his interpretation of Plato at any length, so that we are forced to piece together his exegesis from hints given in various passages. To that end, let us first consider a short passage from his treatise on evil (I.8), where he lays out his basic position:

> The nature of bodies (*sômatôn phusis*), inasmuch as it shares in matter, would be an evil that is not primary. For [bodies] have a sort of form that is not true (*eidos ti ouk alêthinon*) and are deprived of life and destroy each other and their motion is disorderly (*phora…aktaktos*) and they are impediments to soul's activity and in their incessant flowing they escape being, being a secondary evil (*deuteron kakon*). [I.8.4.1–4]

This passage begins Plotinus' argument that neither the evil that is associated with body nor the evil that is associated with soul is primary or absolute. More concerned to demonstrate that the evil proper to soul is secondary, he here dispenses with the other possibility, that primary evil rests in the "nature of bodies," in summary fashion. Bodies, he says, possess forms, but these forms are not "true" forms. Now, there is little doubt that the nature to which he is referring must be something similar to Proclus' proto-body from which complete forms have been abstracted, for these bodies do not have true form and their disorderly motion opposes soul and the order that soul brings to the body. So what exactly are these illegitimate forms? There can be little doubt that Plotinus is speaking of the unarticulated elements of *Timaeus* 52d1–53b9 which, through their combination with matter, produce the disorderly motion that is described in 30a and that corresponds to a (hypotheti-

cally) pre-cosmic evil.[44] In concert with most Platonists, Plotinus construes these as trace-forms of the elements that, with matter, form a pre-cosmic or proto-body that he typically names either the nature of bodies, as here, the qualified body (*to sôma toionde*), or the body in itself (*auto to sôma*). We shall see that what in Plotinus' interpretation of Plato causes the blending of these trace-forms with matter is nature (*phusis*) or the vegetative soul. At this point we may draw one important conclusion from this short text: in the debate among Platonists over which of the two constituents of the mixture, matter or the trace-forms, is the source of the disorderliness of the motion, and so of its evil, Plotinus, quite unsurprisingly, asserts unreservedly that matter is the cause. On this point, too, then, he is at odds with Proclus, who, if he were to press him on the matter, would want to know what would allow Plotinus to bestow such an active role in the generation of evil on what is supposedly a completely passive matter.

There are several other passages in the *Enneads* that further illuminate Plotinus' understanding of the process by which matter is blended with the trace-forms to generate a secondary, 'pre-cosmic' evil. One of these, III.9.3.8–17, is worth a closer look because of its relationship to Plotinus' discussion of the "nature of bodies" in I.8.4.

> …but when [the soul] directs itself towards what comes after it, it is directed towards not-being. It does this whenever it is directed towards itself. For wishing to come to itself it creates a posterior image (*to met' autên poiei eidôlon*) of itself, not-being, as though it were walking in emptiness and becoming more indefinite. And the indefinite image of this is wholly dark. For it is wholly irrational and lacking intelligence and much separated from being. In the meantime it is in its own place, but looking back, as though by a second approach it gives shape to the image (*hoion deuterai prosbolêi to eidôlon emorphôse*) and approaches it with joy.

One interpretation of this passage, first proposed by Denis O'Brien, is that when soul produces an image of itself it is producing matter.[45] This is the result of soul's first approach, or *prosbolê*, as it begins its creative activity. In its second approach soul is said to inform its image and to approach it rejoicing. O'Brien does not say much about this second foray of soul away from the intelligible world, only that neither this

[44] Other commentators have noted vague connections between this passage and one or another of the relevant texts of *Timaeus*, but the real influence of these texts on Plotinus has not heretofore been recognized. Cf. O'Meara, (1999), 111 and Erler (1978), 187.

[45] As we shall see, the images it produces are the forming principles or *logoi*.

nor the first approach, which in his view results in the generation of the principle of evil, is in itself evil. Leaving aside for now the question of the accuracy of his interpretation,[46] the fact that soul undergoes a kind of double descent is remarkable, and if we are going to arrive at some understanding of Plotinus' meaning here, we shall need to make some accounting of it. Consideration of two additional passages will shed light on this one.

> The forming principle compels the better things and molds them. But all that is not so [i.e. better] rests potentially in the forming principles, but actually in what has come to be; soul no longer needs to create anything or to arouse the rational principles since matter, through the disturbance that comes from the preceding forming principles (*tôi seismôi tôi ek tôn proêgoumenôn logôn*) is already creating what derives from it, the worse things, although nonetheless it is in turn governed [by the 'later' forming principles] for the purpose of [generating] what is better. And so [all things] are one, having come to be differently in each of these two ways, and, in turn, differently in the forming principles… (II.3.16.47–54)

> But how, therefore, is it necessary that, if the Good exists, then so should evil? Is it because there must be matter in the All? For this All must be made up of opposite principles; it would not exist if matter did not. For the nature of this universe is a mixture of intellect and Necessity [*Timaeus* 48a1–2], and what comes into it from God is good, while evil is from the ancient nature (*ek tês arkhaias phuseôs*), by which Plato means matter as substratum, not yet brought to order by some god (*tên hulên …tên hupokeimenên oupô kosmêtheisan ek theou tou*). (I.8.7.1–8)

Our first passage makes it clear that in the creation of a single, harmonious universe there are two, hypothetically discrete processes of becoming, one involving soul directly in the production of good things and the other described as matter's production of what is worse through the "disturbance" that is visited upon it by the "preceding principles." Whatever these principles are, they are distinguished from the *logoi* that create what is good and they somehow come to matter "before" them.[47]

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[46] It will become clear in what follows that I do not agree with O'Brien's view that in soul's first *prosbolê* it produces matter. Those familiar with the theses of O'Brien and Corrigan will note in what immediately follows that my interpretations of other passages that are important to their arguments, particularly that of III.4.1, are quite different from theirs. Rather than creating matter, what the partial soul or nature produces, I contend, is the trace-soul that blends directly with matter. I hope to take up the issue of whether or not Plotinus argued that soul generates matter in the future.

[47] They are closely connected if not identified with the perceptive or vegetative soul. Plotinus refers repeatedly to this image of soul throughout his late treatise on

When soul comes to the disturbance caused by the initial *logoi* and matter, it no longer creates, but simply forces order on disorder toward the formation of a unified whole.[48] The second passage makes the same distinction, although here the production of what is worse is identified with the Necessity of *Timaeus* and is due to the "ancient nature", an allusion to the myth of the *Statesman* where, as we have seen, Plato describes the period of pre-cosmic disorder (*ataxia*) brought about by the dominant corporeal nature (*sômatoeides*). In the *Statesman* myth as well as in the *Enneads*, once order is imposed, all that is good comes from the divine creator and donor of order, while all that is evil derives from the "ancient nature" that survives in the generated cosmos. I suggested earlier that it was by this time a standard feature of Platonic exegesis to link closely the pre-cosmic disorderly motion of *Timaeus* to the pre-cosmic disorder of the corporeal nature in *Statesman*.[49] The same thinking, I contend, is behind this and the other *Enneads* passages under discussion here. The generation of evil in the world comes from what Plato mythically describes as the disorderly motion or "disturbance" (*seismos*) caused by the mixture of matter and traces of the elements or forms—or what Plotinus refers to in I.8.4 as the forms that are not "true" forms and in II.3.16 as the rational principles that bring a disorderly disturbance to matter prior to the ordering activity of the "true"

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the nature of the living being (I.1), where he is concerned with which parts of the soul are separable from the body and which inseparable. At .3 he speaks of distinct parts of the soul, one of which merely utilizes the body, while the other is mixed with and on the same level with it. At .8 he says that the images form a hierarchical series whose termini are the powers of generation and growth (that is, Aristotle's nutritive soul); each image produces the next in order, and as the series progresses, it approaches ever nearer to not-being. Plotinus considers this series to be a kind of buffer against evil for the divine soul that is its first cause: if each image produces the one that follows, then the divine soul is far from being the direct cause of the powers of generation and growth, which are at the end of the series and are therefore mixed with the not-being of matter; thus, this soul, as he says here, is free of evil. At .11 he terms the "qualified" body that is generated by the image of soul the "beast" from which the divine soul is separable, but the image of soul is not. Finally, at .12 he remarks that, when the soul is punished in Hades, it is only the image of the soul, which he terms a different "life" of soul, that is actually punished, and he likens this situation to the separation of Heracles from his "shade" in Hades described at *Odyssey* 11, 601–602.

[48] When Plotinus says that all things in the cosmos have come to be in "each of these two ways," he is, I think, making a veiled reference to the *Statesman* myth, where, as Proclus emphasizes (see below, note 50), Plato divides creation into two hypothetically distinct periods.

[49] Cf. Plutarch *De an. procr.* 1014BC, p. 148,13ff.; 1015DE, p. 151,17ff.; 1017AB, p. 154,3ff., and Proclus, *In Tim.* I 389,5ff.

forms. Plotinus, then, in principle agreed with those exegetes who saw in the process of creation three discrete stages of matter: matter in and of itself, matter combined with the traces (sometimes called "potencies") of the forms, and, lastly, matter combined with the true forms. Thus the production of "what is worse" described in the passages we are considering now comes not from primary matter, but from the mixture of matter as the substratum with the incomplete forms, so that the "foregoing *logoi*" that soul apparently produces and sends forth first are the Plotinian equivalent of Plato's trace-forms in *Timaeus*. And this stage of matter corresponds both to soul's initial *prosbolê* in III.9.3 and to the *phusis sômatôn* of I.8.4.1–6.

As a final example, let us look at Plotinus' half-mythical account of the descent of soul in VI.4 (22).15–16 (*On the Presence of Being*), which has embedded within it the same reminiscences of Plato's disorderly motion.

> When a living being has come to be, which has soul present to it from being, through which it has affinity to all being, but which also has a body present to it that is not empty or without a portion of soul, and did not rest in the soulless (*to apsukhon*) before this, but still more, as it were, coming near [to soul] by its receptivity, and it is not the body alone that comes to be, but a body that is also living, and by means of what we might call its closeness it reaps a certain trace of soul (*ikhnos psukhês*), not a portion of it, but as though a warming or illumination that comes to it—there then grows out of this the genesis of desires, pleasures, and pains… The soul that comes from the divine world, as is its custom, was calm, preserving what is its own for itself, while the body, because of its weakness thrown into confusion, thrusting itself around, and buffeted by external blows, first spoke out to the living being in common, and bestowed its own distress on the whole. Just so a disorderly mob (*dêmos ataktos*) in an assembly of town elders convened in quiet counsel, begging for food and making an issue of other matters from which it suffers, embroils the entire assembly in unseemly confusion.

Plotinus describes the coming-to-be of a living being, which occurs when only a trace (*ikhnos*) of soul,[50] to be distinguished from a full part of soul, enters the nature of body (*phusis sômatos*), which itself is not

[50] Erler (1978), 125, n. 1 notes that the phrase *deuteron ikhnos zôês* shows up in Hermeias (*In Phaedr.* 102,21ff.) as a description of the irrational soul, which is also termed irrational life and the mortal form of soul. Erler compares this passage with Proclus' description of Plato's *horaton* in *Timaeus* 30a as possessing both *ikhnê* of the forms and a disorderly motion. But perhaps a more appropriate source of comparison would be Plotinus.

completely without soul, but is in a state of confusion and disorder, pummeled by blows from outside itself. As in an assembly of elders, when the voice of reason calms the disorderly populace (*dêmos ataktos*), so the soul can assuage the disturbance of the corporeal nature; yet the lower, corporeal nature survives in the generated living being as the seat of that being's evil. Hence our mixed nature as human beings.[51]

To repeat, the "traces" of the higher soul that come down to the corporeal nature are among the *logoi* or rational principles of things. Elsewhere Plotinus describes them as the "outshining" (*eklampsis*) of both Intellect and the higher soul. Soul produces them as images of itself and they descend in increasingly weaker creative activity.[52] In their higher phases they are alive and rational, carrying with them traces (*ikhnê*) of what they will produce when they join with matter (III.6.18.24ff.). In their lowest phase, however, as they approach matter, they have become irrational, lack definition (III.9.3.10ff.), produce what is lifeless insofar as they are no longer real forms of soul (III.4.1.1ff.); they are, in short, mere phantasms which, in their lowest manifestations, are themselves dead and have no power to create (cf. III.8.2.30ff.), the "untrue coming to the untrue" (III.6.13.34). As complete indefiniteness, they must be "perfected" (*teleioumenon*), taking on true form, before they can generate bodies (III.4.1.14f.). It is at this lowest phase of creation that evil arises, not out of bodies themselves, but from the nature of bodies—or, more specifically, from this nature's disorderly motion—that precedes fully formed bodies. As I stated at the beginning of this analysis, while it is clear that, at the point when the incomplete forms enter matter, the motion that results is provided by the *logoi* insofar as they are traces of forms,[53] it is equally clear from I.8.4 and .7 that the disorderliness of the

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[51] Cf. Blumenthal (1971), 63. He notes that the level of soul that enters the body must be the *phutikon*.

[52] On the different orders of *logoi*, cf. III.3.1.1ff. On the lower orders of soul as "images" (*eidôla* or *indalmata*), cf. I.1.8.9ff.; III.4.2.1ff.; IV.4.19; V.2.1–2.

[53] Elsewhere, however, Plotinus strongly denies that, strictly speaking, the forms actually disturb matter when they come into it; nor, for that matter, does matter disturb the forms. The "blows" (*plêgai*) that the forms deliver when combining with matter are not directed toward matter, but toward their opposites (i.e. the power of the form of hotness is directed against the form of coldness, not against the substrate for these forms). As for matter, it is perfectly sterile. If we are to regard her as "Mother" to the forms, as Plato does in *Timaeus* 50d3 and 51a4–5, then we must see her as such from the ancient perspective that the female is merely the vessel to the child, contributing nothing of herself to her offspring (III.6.19). How are we to reconcile this view of matter as qualified agent with that of a purely sterile, passive matter, when both apparently conflicting views arise in the interpretation of the same passages of *Timaeus*?

motion, and thus the evil, are due to matter. But it is important to note that Plotinus thereby adopts the orthodox Platonic view that the evil that is produced is nothing more than a lack of order, and therefore, by implication, not a principle that actively opposes the Good. Plotinus says as much in I.8.8: matter controls the forms that enter it, not as a power like that of a form that controls its opposite (hot, for example, dominating cold), but as shapelessness opposing shape and formlessness opposing form. So it is that in the description of the descent of soul in VI.4.15 the disturbance of the *phusis sômatos* is referred to, not as a force or power of the body, but as its weakness (*astheneia*), the same term that he, and Proclus after him, employ to depict the evil that attaches to the soul.[54]

What we have here, I believe, are elements of the first Neoplatonic reading of Plato's disorderly motion, one that observes the two basic rules of Platonic exegesis: that in *Timaeus* Plato is speaking hypothetically rather than literally and that the world is continually and everlastingly in the process of generation. In Plotinus' reading there is one universe made up of things that are constituted in two ways, one through the guidance of soul and the forming principles, so that what is produced is "better", and the other through matter and the "untrue" forms that disturb it, so that what is produced is "worse", due to the resulting disorderly motion. In Plato's cosmic order, of course, the better governs the worse. So, while some parts of the universe contain evil, the whole is unified and good.

For Plotinus, then, Plato's treatment of the disorderly motion connects the origin of evil not only with the creation of the cosmos, but also with an account of the descent of the soul that goes beyond the question of soul's "audacity" (*tolma*). Yet even in this, as in his consideration of the evil in the soul, Plotinus gives to matter an active role that, strictly speaking, it should not have.

The answer comes (as we see in what follows) in I.8.8: the forms are corrupted by matter, not in the sense that a form with its power destroys its opposite form, but as shapelessness corrupts shape and formlessness form (see above). Thus, at least within his doctrine of evil and in a very qualified, although nonetheless very Platonic, way Plotinus does preserve Plato's notion of a reciprocity of disturbance in the 'pre-cosmic' mixture of matter and the traces of the elements. In other words, matter is by no means a motive cause—if it were, Plotinus was well aware, his doctrine of evil would be mired in a Numenian dualism—but neither is it completely passive in the generation of evil.

[54] Cf. III.6.6.

The "nature of bodies" is thus matter which has been "shaken" by its mixture with the trace-forms and which, through the contribution to the mixture of its own absolute deficiency, becomes the source of evil in bodies. So it is that Plotinus identifies it with Plato's "ancient nature" that in the myth of *Statesman* is the pre-cosmic seat of evil.

We may conclude, then, that, in keeping with the Platonist tradition, Plotinus connects the origin of the disorderly motion (*phora ataktos*) of *Timaeus* 30a with the mixture of matter with the trace-forms described in 52d ff. That matter could contribute actively to the generation of the pre-cosmic chaos exercised many of Plato's interpreters, who took to heart the often repeated objection that matter, being entirely without quality, could hardly itself produce change in something else.[55] One who was not so exercised was Numenius, who identified matter with Plato's disorderly motion and, thus, with the Necessity that opposed Reason; but, then, his matter possessed a soul and so its own source of motion. Most, of course, saw fit to separate soul from matter, although in many cases they did not specify the origin of the disorderly motion, an omission that Aristotle finds in Plato's own account.[56] Exceptions to this rule are Plutarch and Atticus, who attributed the disorderly motion to the evil World Soul of *Laws* 896a ff., which combines with matter to form the *akosmia*, the state of chaos on which God then imposes order. For Plutarch, who saw the creation of the world as a temporal event, the *akosmia* that Plato describes in *Timaeus* 30a and 52d ff. is a kind of proto-genesis that precedes the true creation. Nonetheless, we do find in Plutarch that matter, while completely devoid of qualities and by no means possessing self-motion, is not entirely passive in these two stages of generation, but offers something of its own nature to the process. Similar views of the role of matter are found in other sources.[57] In none of these accounts is matter made out to be an efficient cause of evil; still, although motion is imparted by the traces of the elements, the disorderliness of the motion is the responsibility of matter itself and is 'given' to the mixture by matter by virtue of the instability that Plato ascribes to it as an intrinsic trait in *Timaeus* 52d ff.

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[55] See, for example, Plutarch, *De an. procr.* 1015AB, p. 150.

[56] *Met.* 1071b31 ff. and cf. *De caelo* 280a5 ff. and 300b16 ff. On this see Baltes (1978), 156, n. 276.

[57] Cf. Alcinous, *Didask.* 12,2 and 13,3 and Calcidius, *In Tim.* c. 352, the latter likely following a Middle Platonic source.

Plotinus certainly affirmed this exegesis. To repeat, while in all likelihood he ascribed the source of the motion of the *phusis sômatôn* to the incomplete forms, he leaves no doubt that the disorderliness of the motion—that is to say, its evil—is due to matter itself.[58]

3. The Irrational Soul and Matter

There is a second and related principle tied to the Platonist tradition that Plotinus observes in the texts cited above. This principle, which goes back at least as far as the period of Middle Platonism, is part of a Platonist effort to explain the relationship of soul to body; more specifically, as Henry Blumenthal maintained,[59] it is an attempt to reconcile Platonic and Aristotelian conceptions of the soul. Iamblichus refers to it as the subject of a debate among Platonists regarding the extent of the soul's descent into the body.[60] Concerning the essences that are intermediate between the soul and the body, he says, accounts differ. Most Platonists contend that the soul itself enters the living body immediately, while others say that between the incorporeal soul and the body are ethereal, heavenly, and pneumatic vehicles and that it is these vehicles that attach themselves to the body. The principle to which this latter group adheres, then, holds that the higher soul cannot enter or in any sense become attached directly to what is purely material; there must be an intermediate level of creation, before the embodiment of the rational soul as part of cosmic generation, when matter is initially informed. This informing is done either by the irrational soul or by some part or power of (or beneath) the irrational soul, usually the nutritive soul (or simply nature, *phusis*), a concept that

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[58] In support of my reading of I.8.4.1–6, I might add that the use of the phrase *phora ataktos* to refer to the *horaton* is attested already in Plutarch (*De an. procr.* 1017A, p. 154,24 f.), and is also employed later by Proclus (*Th. Pl.* V 9, p. 31,2). Also, from their readings of the *Timaeus* both Porphyry (*ap.* John Philoponus *De aet. mundi* 14, p. 546,17 ff.) and Proclus (*In Tim.* I 383,1–22; 389,5 ff.; 394,9 ff.; *Pl. Th.* I 11,9 ff.; *In Parm.* VI, 1045,26 ff.; *DMS* cc. 55 and 58) speak of a *phusis* that bears a strong similarity to Plotinus' *phusis sômatôn*. See also Dodds (1963), 209, Baltes (1978), 155 ff. and Erler (1978), 187.

[59] Cf. the chapter entitled "The Sub-sensitive Soul" in (1996). See also Geudtner (1971), 18 ff.

[60] *De anima ap.* Stobaeus 385,1 ff. See also Proclus, *In Tim.* III 299,13–22. In both cases we find that this principle is closely connected to the doctrine of the vehicles of the soul, a fact ignored by Blumenthal. Among members of the second group Iamblichus must have in mind Atticus and his followers (see below). On the doctrine of the vehicles of the soul, see especially Finamore (1985); cf. also Siorvanes (1996), 130 ff.

we shall investigate more thoroughly in the next chapter. In this way the independence of the true (rational) soul from the body is preserved: it comes into direct contact, not with primary matter, but with a bodily nature or proto-body that is already partially informed. In the later tradition there is a tendency to disassociate this power (for those who believed the irrational soul and its powers to be, with the rational soul, parts of a single soul) from the soul itself, insofar as it became the formal cause of bodies *per se*, and to consider it an inseparable aspect of the body.

One of the earliest applications of this principle within the Platonist tradition is by Atticus. According to Iamblichus, Atticus was the leader of a group of exegetes who claimed that, in all cases of soul's embodiment, the "irrational, discordant (*plêmmelê*), and enhylic soul" enters matter first, and this event is followed by the coalescence of this soul with the rational soul as order is established in the former.[61] This sequence of events parallels what happens on a cosmic level, so that we should suspect influence from Plutarch's idea of a pre-cosmic, disordered body that is antecedent to the ordered body of the universe.[62] Significant here is the clearly implied connection between the principle as applied by Atticus and his exegesis of Plato's disorderly motion. The "irrational and confused" soul that enters matter obviously derives from the evil World Soul which is the source of the pre-cosmic chaotic motion. Thus, just as happens on the cosmic level, the individual body is generated when the disorderly and irrational soul, in its union with the rational soul, submits to its orderly governance.

That the rationale for this initial descent is to preserve the independence and full separability of the rational soul is confirmed by Proclus. Neoplatonists had appropriated the Middle Platonic view that the first informing of matter is performed by the irrational soul, and so it is for Proclus the "mortal" soul that descends into creation before the "divine" soul. As we shall see, the mortal soul is equivalent to what Proclus terms the "irrational nature" (*alogos phusis*) which, together with matter, generates the corporeal nature, the seat of the disorderly motion

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[61] Iamblichus, *De anima ap.* Stobaeus I 379,25ff., and see also 374,21ff. Cf. Dillon (1973), 372, n. 3, who notes a possibly "analogous" notion in the Hermetic tradition. There is some similarity in Aristotle's idea, expressed in *De motu animal.* 10, that the soul interacts with the body through the mediation of a "connate breath" (*sumphuton pneuma*). Cf. also Galen, *De plac. Hipp. et Plat.* 7, 474,22ff.

[62] *De an. procr.* 1016D–1017A. Cf. Deuse (1983), 236 on Plutarch and des Places (1977), 13 on Atticus. See also Thévenaz (1938), 98f.

that is the source of evil in bodies. The mortal soul must join with bodies first, he says, in order to shield the divine soul from direct contact with flesh and bones and all of what is purely material. "For how could a soul that is in itself incorporeal and immortal take part in a dead and fully compounded [*sc.* from the four elements] body?"[63] To do so would destroy its rationality. It is necessary, then, that the world contain an assortment (*summixis*) of souls so that beings here might gain rational lives and, in turn, rational lives might be prevented from entering bodies without the mediation (*mesotês*) of a "pre-cosmic" informing of bare matter by a mortal 'soul.' For otherwise these rational lives would possess what are exclusively the attributes of irrational beings, that is, desire, perception, and imagination.[64] In this way, the mortal soul exists for the sake of the rational soul, rather than in spite of it, in an arrangement dictated by divine Providence.[65] Its descent into bodies is a necessary condition for the completion of the cosmos.

Returning to Plotinus' description of soul's two descents in *Enneads* III.9.3 and elsewhere, we may now say that the first of these descents described in these passages—in which what descends is really but an image or trace of soul, followed by the descent of the true or rational soul—is Plotinus' version of Proclus' intermediate stage of creation, between matter bare and unadorned and fully formed, natural bodies, when matter is informed by something that is associated with soul, but distinct from the rational soul.[66] That Plotinus is applying the same principle that is employed by Atticus and Proclus in the

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[63] *De dec. dub.* c. 31, p. 50,13–19. *Mixture* translates the Greek *suntheton* and the sense is that the body is a compound of the four elements.

[64] *In Remp.* I 38,17–20.

[65] *De dec. dub.* c. 31, p. 53.33–34.

[66] The distinction between the intermediate and final stages of creation explains Plotinus' puzzling reference to the two "natures" in VI.4.16.8–10. Our coming-to-be as living beings, he says, is not participation in "that" nature, but the participation of "this" nature in "that" one. "That" nature is obviously what he terms a few lines later the "nature of body" (*sômatos phusis*), and "this" nature is our rational soul. The point is, then, that the first descent does not produce the living being (a point he has already made in the preceding chapter: the blending of matter with the trace-soul produces body *simpliciter*; this body gains life only when the rational soul enters it in the second descent); only in the second descent, when our rational nature comes together with the irrational nature, do we come to be living beings. The irrational nature thus acts as a kind of buffer for the rational soul against too intimate a contact with the material aspect of the living being and ensures that, throughout soul's embodiment, the divine part of us remains foreign to and independent of the material part.

passages mentioned above comes out most clearly in his declaration in VI.4.15.12–18 that when the soul that comes "from being" enters the body, it enters something that possesses a "trace" of soul already. But he clearly appeals to the same principle in each of the other passages that we have discussed. Also present are a number of correlative concepts that were apparently important parts of its common expression. For example, the idea to which Proclus refers, that the "pre-cosmic" irrationality is necessary for the perfection of the cosmos, is expressed by Plotinus in two of the passages cited above. And, like Proclus, he stresses the rational soul's transcendence to the chaos engendered by the first descent of the trace-forms or trace-soul into matter. The divine soul, he says in VI.4.15.19–26, remains "quiet" (*hesukhos*) above the turmoil going on below it; in III.9.3.15 it is "in its own place." Moreover, the passages that we have considered show that he follows the Middle Platonic exegesis of Atticus and his followers in connecting Plato's account of the generation of the disorderly motion with the principle that rational soul cannot come into contact with matter *per se*. He speaks of the reciprocal disturbance produced by matter and the "preceding principles" (II.3.16.51–53), the latter an allusion to Plato's trace-forms. Also, the "disorderly mob" referred to in VI.4.15.24 is a transparent metaphor for Plato's disorderly motion. Through this connection, what Plotinus calls the "trace" (VI.4.15.15) or "image" (III.9.3.10–17) of soul that first comes into contact with matter is taken to be the equivalent of the trace-forms of *Timaeus*, and the "nature of body"—that is, the body conceived in itself—that is produced from this contact becomes the subject of the disorderly motion that constitutes corporeal evil.

The disorderly motion that is caused by the combination of the trace of soul with matter both allows the higher soul to preserve its separation from the corporeal nature and is identified by Plotinus with the origin of the passions in the individual soul. As we recall in VI.4.15, the living being is composed of a soul that emanates from the intelligible world and a body that is itself not "empty or devoid of soul" (*kenou oude psukhês amoirou*). This is the "trace of soul" (*ikhnos psukhês*) that the body gains through its "nearness" to the soul.[67] It is not a part (*meros*) of the soul,

[67] *têi hoion geitoneiai*. The soul that imparts this trace of soul is nature (*phusis*), as we see in other passages. His choice of language is significant: nature does not itself "enter" matter, but generates the trace of soul in it from without. We find similar terminology in IV.4.18.3f., where nature is described as *to proshomiloun tôi sômati*, or that

but more like a warming or illumination (*thermasias tinos ê ellampseôs*) that derives from the soul. In this way desires, pleasures, and pains are born in the body. In addition, the introduction of the trace of soul renders the body suitable for receiving the soul descending from the intelligible world (i.e. it makes it not "alien," *allotrion*, to the descending soul). After the rational soul descends, it remains quiet and by itself while the body suffers chaotic, disordered movements caused by the introduction of this trace of soul into the body. The person of virtue, however, is able to gain control of such passions.

A slightly more detailed description of the trace of soul and its relationship to both the higher soul and the body comes in IV.4.18–20. Here Plotinus poses a question: Does the body possess anything in and of itself (*eph' heautou*), that is, does it have something peculiar to it (*ti idion*) already (*êdê*) when soul is present to it, or is nature (*phusis*) what it possesses, so that it is nature that associates with the body? His answer is that the body conceived in itself (*auto to sôma*), in which, as separate entities, exist both the higher soul and nature, cannot be without soul (*apsukhon*), nor can it be like air that is illuminated, but it is like air that is warmed (*tethermasmenos*).[68] The body of an animal or plant has, as it were, a shadow (*skian*) of soul, and it is this qualified body (*to toionde sôma*) that the passions affect. By becoming an intermediate (*metaxu*) entity, existing in a state between what it was (presumably matter) and what it aspired to be (a soul or form of life), the qualified body has assumed a precarious relationship with the soul. Hence the chaotic movements that produce the passions. This separation of the origin of the passions from the parts of the irrational soul that derive from the universal soul allows these parts to perceive the passions without being directly affected by them. The source of the passions is, then, the corporeal nature (*tês sômatikês phuseôs* = the qualified body). This nature wants to be something beyond mere body and has thus taken

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which "associates" with the body, as distinct from the trace of soul, which is truly in it (see below). Again, it is the presence of the trace-soul in the body that ensures the separability of the higher parts of the soul.

[68] It is interesting to contrast this statement with that in the former passage (VI.4.15) regarding the description of the effect of the trace of soul on matter as a kind of "warming" and the "illumination" of air. Rather than being like *either* an illumination *or* a warming of the air, as in VI.4.15, here it is like a warming of the air *rather than* an illumination. Most likely in the latter passage Plotinus called to mind the fact that illumination is a term that he commonly uses to describe the activity of the divine soul and Intellect.

on more movements than the soul itself, although these movements are purely irrational. Nature and the body are thus different things. It is nature (*phusis*) that bestows the trace (*ikhnos*) of soul on the body and thus produces the qualified body. And it is here in the qualified body, rather than in some part of the soul, that the passions—the disorderly motions produced in matter by the trace-soul—originate.[69]

From these passages we find that each living being is composed of a soul that maintains contact with the intelligible world and a body that itself is not devoid of soul, since it possesses a soul before (*proteron*) the rational soul descends to it. This "earlier" presence of soul ensures that the "body in itself," or the "nature of body," is not "alien" (*allotrion*) to the descending soul, the implication being that neither the rational soul nor the irrational soul (in the form of nature or *phusis*) can enter unqualified matter.[70] The qualified body thus stands as an intermediate (*metaxu*) stage between unqualified matter and the production of the fully formed body.[71] During this intermediate stage of generation the higher soul is said to remain quiet and off to itself, so to speak, thus maintaining its distance from the material being while at the same time giving life to it. By contrast, the body with its trace (*ikhnos*) of soul is undergoing frenetic movements and blows as "desires, pleasures, and pains" are engendered in it. But over this chaos the higher soul, despite its aloofness, establishes its appropriate mastery. This is the proper state of the fully generated, compound being. There is indication from our passages that only at this stage, that of the fully formed body in which

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[69] Later in the same treatise, Plotinus asks whether the echo (*enapêkhêthen*) of soul that is in the body of plants differs from what produces it (22.1 ff.). The same question is brought up again at .27, where he returns to use of the phrase "trace of soul." At .28 he once more asserts that the principle of growth (nature) produces the trace of soul in "all" of the body, and it is in this that the passions are born. The trace of soul thus not only brings shape to bodies, but is as well the psychic power through which the irrational passions originate.

[70] It seems clear enough that "the body in itself" (*auto to sôma*), the "qualified body" (*to toionde sôma*), and the "nature of bodies" (*hê sômatikê phusis* or *sômatôn phusis*) are all synonymous terms for Plotinus insofar as they each refer to the intermediate stage of generation between matter itself and the fully naturalized body.

[71] The higher images (*eidôla*) of the universal soul, which Plotinus usually identifies as perception (*aisthêsis*) and nature, are themselves, for their part, buffers between the soul that is above them and the body. At I.1.8.9 ff. Plotinus explains that the universal soul illuminates and creates living beings not by itself combining with bodies, but by projecting images of itself downward while remaining quiet and in its own place. Yet even at the last remove from the universal soul, at the level of nature, the faintest of that soul's images that is nearest to matter, direct immersion in matter is impossible and is precluded by nature's generation of its own shadow or trace in the body.

the rational soul is the properly ruling force, does the body gain life. For nature bestows life upon the living being, and this can only happen after it generates the trace of soul in matter.

These texts require us to reevaluate Plotinus' assertions elsewhere that nature creates "in matter" (II.3.17.1 ff.; II.5.3.33 f.). Nature, while "near" matter, is never truly "in" it, if by matter we mean the lowest or pre-cosmic matter—matter completely unqualified. When soul completes its descent to matter, at the point when nature begins its creative work, what it confronts is not unqualified matter, but a body already possessing some remnant of soul. It is for this reason, I suggest, that in the passages analyzed above Plotinus refers to the relationship of nature to matter as one of nearness (VI.4.15) or association (IV.4.18) rather than one of direct presence.

In none of the passages cited above do we get a very clear depiction of the trace-soul that nature produces—other than to be told that it is more of a warming than an illumination of the body and that it is what brings to matter motion and shape. A more precise description of this lowest of the images of soul is to be found in Plotinus' treatise on nature (III.8). In arguing that nature must be form rather than a combination of matter and form, he makes the following statement.

> …nature is a rational principle (*logon*) that generates another rational principle, its product (*gennêma*), which gives something to the substratum but itself remains at rest. This rational principle, then, that is related to the visible shape is already the last (*eskhatos*), dead (*nekros*), and no longer capable of generating another (principle); while the principle that possesses life is brother to the principle of what produces shape and, having itself the same power, generates in what comes into being. [III.8.2.28–34]

There can be little doubt that Plotinus is speaking here of the trace-soul: it is the "product" of nature that comes directly to matter, giving to it both motion and shape.[72] We find in addition that it is the very last of the rational principles (*logoi*) which is dead (*nekros*) and, quite unlike its creator, which is its "brother," lacks any productive power. The motion that it imparts to matter is, again, the unruly and irrational motion

[72] The "something" (*ti*) that the trace *logos* gives to the substratum is certainly motion, as is implied through the contrast drawn between this and the motionlessness of the rational principle itself. Corrigan's (2005), 110 ff., interpretation of this statement, that the "something" is a third rational principle that is "operative in the visible shape" and that it is this, rather than the *gennêma* of nature, that is no longer generative, is simply wrong and a clear case of hyper-analysis.

that in our earlier passages is associated with the passions and ascribed to the qualified body. And there is another point to keep in mind. If, as Plotinus maintains elsewhere, the higher soul extends its reach only as far as nature, and if nature is the last of the higher soul's "parts," then this ultimate rational principle would not seem to have the same relationship to the higher soul as these parts or illuminations. That is, the trace-soul is not to be included among the true illuminations or parts of the universal soul—as, perhaps, we should expect to be the case if, as the lowest of the rational principles, it is lifeless and unable to reproduce further.

The passions, therefore, arise through a psychic power, but it is one that comes to be quite apart from the illuminations or parts of the soul—that is, those parts that remain in touch with the universal soul—since the trace of soul with which the passions are identified, although a rational principle (*logos*), is not strictly speaking a part of soul insofar as it is dead and incapable of doing what a true part of soul must do—create other forms of life. The irrational motions that are engendered in the body by means of the passions do not in this way themselves affect nature or any of the higher images of the soul, although the irrational parts of the soul have cognitive awareness of them. It is important to note the emphasis in these passages on the separation, even of the irrational soul down to the level of nature, from the disorder connected with the qualified body, a separation guaranteed by the fact that what directly coalesces with matter is nothing more than a trace or shadow or echo of soul, not a true part of it. Such a relationship allows all of the rational soul and its images to remain separate from the body since they are not really "in" it to begin with. We may surmise, then, that this trace of soul is what Plotinus has in mind whenever he alludes to the inseparable soul, the soul that has more in common with the body than with the soul proper.[73] What comes to be when nature produces the trace of soul in matter is the qualified body or the "nature of body," by which Plotinus means that it is not a fully natural body since the forms that it contains are not "true" forms and its movements are exclusively irrational. The rational movements associated with the fully living being do not come about until the rational soul comes to the qualified body and takes control of it.

[73] On Plotinus' references to the inseparable soul, see I.1.11.8; I.8.14.17ff.; II.3.9.44f. and .16.1ff.; VI.4.15–16.

In this way Plotinus' trace of soul performs essentially the same functions that were assigned to the sub-sensitive soul throughout the tradition of ancient Platonism, (a) to make it possible for the higher forms of soul, or the separable soul, to come to the body in its first descent, (b) to ensure that the body is not "alien" (*allotrion*) to the separable soul, and (c) to preserve the rational soul's separability from the body. Its connection with the universal soul is tenuous; rather, it belongs more properly to the body conceived in and of itself, providing both shape and movement to the substratum, matter. It makes the body what it is by qualifying it and thereby giving it a nature; the higher soul, through the agency of nature, then bestows life on this nature of body, and at this point it becomes strictly speaking a compound being. The same dynamic is played out on a cosmic level as the "better" principles bring order to the chaotic movements of matter, which have been caused by a (conceptually) antecedent agitation of matter which itself comes as a result of the introduction of "worse" principles, that is, presumably, the traces of soul that bring form to matter, but not "true" form.

I would suggest as well that our passages reveal a tension in Plotinus' treatment of the trace-soul between the need to preserve unbroken the continuity of the procession of the rational principles from the universal soul and the tradition to which he is appealing, according to which the trace-soul belongs more properly to the body than to the soul. To the extent that the trace-soul is a rational principle that bestows motion and shape on matter and is an image of its creator, it exhibits the defining characteristics of a true soul. But insofar as it produces an entirely irrational motion, is sterile and lifeless, and is not a part of the higher soul but belongs to the "body in itself," it would appear to be something distinctly inferior to soul.

What Plotinus refers to as the body in itself, the qualified body, or the nature of body corresponds closely to Proclus' corporeal nature (*to sômatoeides*), the partially formed body-in-itself that is also produced from the inarticulate traces of the forms and possesses the same structural weakness that results in the irrational motions of the passions. We have seen that Proclus' proto-body represents the first of two logically distinct stages of generation, that of corporeal (*sômatourgikê*) creation that is to be conceptually differentiated from the ordering (*kosmêtikê*) creation of the Demiurge and is initiated when irrational nature (*phusis*) produces chaotic motion in matter. In the passages from the *Enneads* that we have considered we have found references to a similarly two-stage process of

creation during which a pre-cosmic or pre-rational chaos in the body-in-itself is brought to order by the descent of the rational soul emanating from the soul of the All. Certainly in both cases what we have are concepts that in the Platonist tradition descend directly from the corporeal nature (*to sômatoeides*) of Plato's *Statesman* myth. Again, however, it is most important to note that what separates Plotinus' exegesis from that of Proclus is the former's view, expressed in I.8.4 and II.3.16, that, although in the initial coalescence of the trace-forms with matter it is the trace-forms (or trace-soul) that cause the motion, nonetheless it is matter that is responsible for the motion's chaotic, evil nature. In the second descent, the rational soul exerts control over the chaos (the "ancient nature" of the *Statesman* myth), turning the evil disorderly motion into something good and thus helping to create a single universe in which good and evil co-exist in cosmic harmony.[74]

4. Bodies as the Principles of Corporeal Evils: Porphyry

Immediately following his summary of Proclus' interpretation of Plato's disorderly motion, Philoponnus analyzes that of Porphyry as a point of contrast. Rather than taking Plato's disorderly motion to be matter imbued with the vestiges of the forms, as Proclus had done, Porphyry argued that it must be full bodies already (*êdê*) having come to be from matter and (true) form.[75] And it is from these natural bodies that the cosmos is then generated. His reasoning was that the principles of the cosmos could not be matter and form existing separately if, as Plato had said, these principles were in motion, for only bodies that are

[74] It is interesting that in I.1.12 Plotinus says not only that it is solely the image of soul, and not the rational soul, that is punished in Hades, but also that this image ceases to exist altogether when the rational soul directs its gaze toward the intelligible world. What we must remember, of course, is that for Plotinus the generation of all lower levels of soul is exclusively a function of the divine soul's turning its attention away from the intelligible world toward creation. That is, these levels are the products of soul's contemplation, and when that contemplation shifts direction, the images are no longer produced.

[75] *De aet. mundi* 14, 3, pp. 546,2 – 547,19. See Deuse (1977), 241ff., Baltes (1976), 154ff. and (1978), 94, and de Haas (1997), 14f. and 16, n. 61. According to Iamblichus, Harpocration maintained that evil derives from "these very bodies of ours" (*De anima ap.* Stobaeus I p. 373,12ff.). It is not clear whether he meant by this fully formed bodies in the sense that Porphyry uses, or the "nature of bodies" or "corporeal nature" in the sense that both Plotinus and Proclus employ. If the latter, then we should like to know further which of the components of that nature's mixture contributed the disorderliness or evil of its motion, matter or the trace-forms. Cf. Dillon (1971) and Waszink (1955).

natural (*phusika*) possess motion, since, as we see in Aristotle, nature (*phusis*) is the principle of motion and rest. Moreover, Plato's description of the primordial motion as "visible" (*horaton*) can only mean that he is attributing this quality to natural bodies, for only bodies are visible. On the other hand matter in itself is formless and comprehended only by a "bastard reasoning," and even matter augmented by the vestiges of the forms is bodiless and formless, "just as the vestiges and shadow-sketch of the image of Socrates is not yet Socrates" (547,10–12). That this motion is irrational is due exclusively to the fact that orderly motion in bodies is necessarily a contribution from God, and God is thus far not present in the pre-cosmic state. These bodies are therefore analogous to a ship without a captain or a chariot without a charioteer (546,23–25). The irrationality of the motion is, then, due solely to a lack of divine creative activity at this stage of becoming. Apparently Porphyry thus conceives of corporeal evil as a privation of reason, although the fully articulated, and so fully rational forms are present to the pre-cosmic bodies. Philoponus does not say whether or how Porphyry reconciled these two conflicting points.

Porphyry's dilemma is exploited in Proclus' analysis: because natural bodies possess the fully articulated forms, he claims, their motion can only be rational. The irrationality of the pre-cosmic motion must be due to the inability of the forms to control the motion,[76] and this can be the case only if we are speaking of partial forms. Further, in his commentary on *Timaeus* 30a–b (*In Tim.* I 400,6–14) he distinguishes between two senses of "visible": what is visible according to nature (*kata phusin*: *Tim.* 30 a 8 f.) which is intelligible and divinely illuminated, and what is visible "to us," which is obscure and indistinct. We properly understand the disorderly motion only in the latter sense, for it is contrary to nature (*para phusin*) with respect to divine creation.[77] Proclus may well have had Porphyry in mind here, in particular his view that the motion of the pre-cosmic bodies must be natural, since nature is the principle of motion and rest.[78] It may be true that the disorderly motion

[76] *DMS* cc. 34 [3.2] ,35 [3.3], and John Philoponus, *De aet. mundi* 14, 1, p. 541,6 – 544,1 [3.16].

[77] Cf. also *DMS* c. 49: evils of the body are privations of nature. He must mean here privations of *rational* nature, since in his analysis the quasi-bodies in disorderly motion possess an irrational *phusis*.

[78] Proclus' comments appear to be taken from the commentary of Iamblichus (cf. 400,2), who very likely was responding directly to Porphyry. His conclusion is that by what is visible according to nature Plato means the intelligibles and not the sensibles.

necessarily belongs to what is corporeal, but such a 'body' cannot possess a rational nature. As Philoponnus points out in his comments on Porphyry's analysis, Plato's concern is to differentiate between the *phusis* intrinsic to bodies themselves and the *phusis* that is granted to them by God. The former *phusis* exists "before" the introduction of the latter,[79] so that the motion for which it is responsible is irrational; thus the bodily nature must itself be irrational. Porphyry's difficulty, then, is to explain how it can be that what has full possession of form nonetheless possesses an irrational nature.

In Proclus' opinion Porphyry has thereby deprived Plato of an adequate explanation for the origin of the irrationality of the motion, and thus of corporeal evil. The two philosophers are in perfect agreement on two points: that bodies cannot impose order on themselves[80] and that when Plato speaks of the disorderly motion as visible he must mean that it is in some sense corporeal.[81] But for Proclus the point at which the forms in matter become fully articulated is the very moment when creation begins and order replaces disorder. So the pre-cosmic "corporeal nature" must be one that occupies a position between matter *per se* and fully formed bodies. And only this irrational nature can account for evil, if bodily evil is to be considered the privation of rational nature.

5. The Cause of Corporeal Evil

Most problematic for Proclus and his Platonist predecessors was Aristotle's criticism of Plato for postulating the existence of the chaotic movement of the trace-forms before the generation of the cosmos without adequately explaining what cause there could be for a motion that occurs before the creative activity of the Demiurge (*De caelo* 300b16ff.). If one is to identify the disorderly motion with matter, as Aristotle thought Plato had done, then the motive cause cannot be internal—unless, of course, one bestows upon matter a soul, as does Numenius; and making the motion eternal, as did Leucippus and Plato according to Aristotle, is no answer, since there is still no accounting for a first cause (*Meta.* 1071b31ff.). A satisfactory solution to this problem eluded the Middle Platonists. Efforts to separate the chaotic motion from matter and place it in some other quasi-principle was no better option. The

[79] Whether or not this nature is eternal is a question we shall take up later.
[80] See again *In Tim.* I, 394,28f. [3.9].
[81] *In Tim.* I 387,8–11 and *DMS* c. 34 [3.2].

rather creative coalescence of interpretations of *Timaeus* 30a and *Laws* 896a–897b by Plutarch and Atticus—so strongly rejected by the Neoplatonists because it produced two pre-cosmic principles, a disordered matter and an evil World Soul, the latter generating motion in matter—would not do, for it is very un-Platonic to argue that disorder precedes order, whether we are to take this to be a temporal precedence—which in Aristotle's view is the only sense in which that can happen (*De caelo* 280a5ff.)—or a conceptual one. As we see in what follows, attempts to evade this problem were ingenious if not convincing.

With respect to the question of evil Porphyry's dilemma is to determine how to account for the irrationality of the pre-cosmic bodies' disorderly motion. Evil's cause certainly cannot be God, but neither can it be the fully articulated forms. We are left with matter itself as the possible source, but he would then be faced with a further question that had dogged others who had taken this stance: how can matter, which is completely without form and quality, be the cause of anything? As we have noted, Philoponus in his summary of Porphyry's interpretation gives no clue as to how he might have answered either of these questions, but we do know of similar attempts by others to grant to matter a certain potency for producing chaos. Such attempts often focus on *Timaeus* 52d–53c, where Plato says that the "shaking" (*seismos*) that is produced when the traces of the forms combine with matter is reciprocal, that is, matter, having been shaken by the elements entering into it, in turn shakes them. Insofar as this shaking is identified by Platonists with the disorderly motion of 30a, Plato would seem to be saying that matter plays some active or quasi-active role in the generation of corporeal evil.

This explanation is not infrequent in the tradition.[82] It quite likely was embraced by the Middle Platonist Hermogenes, a rather shadowy figure whose Platonism is known to us almost solely through the

[82] The accounts of Timaeus Locrus and Diogenes Laertius at least broadly follow this pattern, although each is problematic for modern interpreters. For Timaeus the disorderly motion begins when matter, which is eternal, receives form, but he gives no indication as to what causes form to come together with matter; it cannot be the God, for he says that God merely "sees" (*ho theos horôn*) their combination take place. And are these the vestiges of the forms, in accordance with the more standard version, or full forms, as in Porphyry's interpretation? Moreover, it is not clear whether this is the beginning of motion *simpliciter* since earlier (206,2) he had described matter as not without motion. He may mean matter already joined with form, but there is no way of knowing with certainty.

Diogenes asserted a reciprocity of motive forces between the *dektika* or traces of the

polemic directed against him by Tertullian.[83] According to Tertullian, Hermogenes held that matter in itself is neither good nor evil, yet is still the source of evil to the extent that it is by its nature in a "chaotic condition." Tertullian finds in this line of reasoning a fundamental flaw, but it is probable that Hermogenes' position is founded on a distinction between matter *per se*, which for the Stoics and many Platonists is indeed neither good nor evil, and matter disturbed by some principle of motion introduced externally, most likely through its pre-cosmic contact with the vestiges of the forms. His justification, based on his reading of *Timaeus* 52d–53e, would have been that matter in itself cannot be productive of anything either good or evil; but, once brought into motion by some outside force, to which matter contributes its own disorderliness, it becomes the co-cause of corporeal evil.

Hermogenes may then have adopted an interpretation of Plato much like that found in Alcinous, who saw Plato's *ikhnê* as the mere traces of the forms of the four elements that, before the creation of the cosmos, in a kind of proto-genesis similar to that found in Plutarch, are imprinted onto matter, producing an "irrational and immoderate" movement which God then brought to order. But he makes it clear that the effects of this motive force are not unilateral, for while it is true that matter, which in its previous state of isolation was at rest, is agitated through the impression of these traces, matter in turn somehow brings its own agitation to the traces.[84]

A similar interpretation is found in Calcidius (*In Tim.* cc. 352–354), who is most likely following a Middle Platonic source when he states that, according to Plato, motion originated in matter when the "bodies"—that is, the traces of the elements—were "thrown into" it and their preponderance brought changes to matter which was before merely the ability to receive motion and rest. Some Platonists, he says (c. 301), adopted this interpretation as a challenge to that of Numenius and his followers. If matter completely lacks qualification, then the source of the disorderly motion cannot come from within it; the cause must be the trace-forms that disturb matter. Yet, Calcidius says, mat-

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elements and matter, although, as mentioned earlier, the relationship between these *dektika* and the divine Paradigm is obscure. Cf. also Apuleius, *De Plat.* VII (194), who imputes the disordered motion to the "simple" elements engendered from the mixture of matter with forms. Again, there is no clear indication of the source or sources of the irrationality of the motion.

[83] See Waszink (1955).

[84] *Epit.* 12.2 and 13.3.

ter then, once agitated by these bodies, reciprocated by itself moving bodies. The source of the motion is thus external to matter in itself, although matter is, as it were, a co-factor in the origination of the disorderliness of the motion to the extent that, due to its "unstable and trembling base," it is unable to control the fluctuation of these bodily masses. It is worth noting that Calcidius does not say that matter causes the chaos of the motion, but only that the chaos "…came about in accordance with the nature of matter…" Perhaps his choice of words—or that of his source—is meant to assure us that pre-cosmic evil is not a force of any sort but a privation of power; evil is simply due to matter's utter formlessness. In any case, Calcidius apparently regards neither of the principles in this pre-cosmic situation, matter or the traces of the elements, as evil in an absolute sense.

From a relatively early point in the exegetical tradition, then, the accepted interpretation of Plato was that matter is not purely passive in the coming-to-be of evil, but has a certain, while limited, participation in it.[85] The inescapable difficulty with this sort of explanation is that it seems to invest matter with an active function that it should not properly have. There is little to be gained in saying that matter's contribution to corporeal evil is exclusively its formlessness, if one cannot adequately account for Plato's statement that matter, although being utter privation, nonetheless is capable of bringing about an agitation in the traces of the forms. For the dualists, of course, no such problem exists. Like most Platonists Plutarch links *Timaeus* 30a with 52d ff. and refers to the reciprocal effects of the combination of matter with form, but is emphatic that the true cause of the disorderly motion is the primordial soul.[86] By divorcing matter from pre-cosmic evil, he can also stress its positive aspects. Indeed, he asserts rather boldly that matter actively strives for *nous*.[87] This separation of matter from responsibility for the

[85] On the two tendencies in Middle Platonism to regard matter as completely passive and entirely neutral in the generation of the disorderly motion and as a strong and active power, see Den Boeft (1970), pp. 86f.

[86] *De an. procr.* 1016D–1017A; and 1024A. Left largely unexplained by Plutarch is the exact relationship between the primordial soul and the trace-forms. At *De fac.* 12, 926D–927A he says that when these forms were separate (apparently from matter), they possessed "private and self-willed movements," and compares this state with the ascendancy of Strife in Empedocles. If we are to reconcile this with what we find elsewhere, then we must assume that the evil soul has somehow combined with the elements before their introduction into matter, and thus has imparted to them their native motion.

[87] *De Is.et Os.* 374F.

disorderly motion serves the same purpose as the Peripatetic separation of matter from privation; matter, although certainly contributing otherwise to the evil that comes to be in the generated cosmos, is nevertheless not conceived as the principle of evil, so that, *inter alia*, it preserves a place for itself in the chain of being, which is to say, like all things by its nature it seeks the Good. It is against this background that we can better understand Proclus' own ideas regarding the relationship of evil to his first principle.

Yet the dualists are not entirely immune from charges of inconsistency of doctrine. Porphyry's refutation of Atticus includes reference to the latter's idea that creation begins when matter—which before, due to the influence of the primordial soul, was in irrational motion and so opposed the ordering power of the divine cause—at some point assumed a "receptivity" (*epitêdeia*) to that power. But if, as Porphyry maintains, the irrational motion just is the lack of receptivity of the proto-creation to order, then how can it become ready to receive form without already having been thoroughly transformed?[88] If he is to avoid the intractable problem of explaining the cause of this sudden change of nature in the proto-creation,[89] the only recourse for Atticus is to disavow any form of temporal creation.

Neoplatonists on the Cause of the Disorderly Motion

Among the Neoplatonists we find two contrasting attempts to account for the pre-cosmic cause of the disorderly motion. We have seen that Plotinus in his description of the nature of bodies (I.8.4) is giving his version of what according to Plato is engendered from the impression of the traces of the forms of the elements on matter, i.e. the disorderly motion of bodies. But this corporeal nature is itself, like the sinful soul, only a secondary evil (*kakon deuteron*); in both cases the source of their disorderliness and thus of their evil is exclusively matter. There is no hint of causal reciprocity or indication that the chaotic motion is

[88] *In Tim.* I 394,9ff.

[89] The cause cannot be God, either, since that would amount to imputing to him an alteration in his *boulêsis* (*In Tim.* I 394,12–16). Proclus' argument thus amounts to a rejection as well of the view of Alcinous that it is God who directly carries out the process of combining matter with the trace-forms and that the evil of the resulting chaotic disturbance is nothing more than its lack of order and form.

occasioned by the combination of trace-forms and matter as we found in the Middle Platonists; nor, for that matter, does Plotinus explain how the motion of bodies comes about. But he leaves no doubt that the sole source of the disorderliness of that motion is the corporeal nature's participation in matter.

Neoplatonists after Plotinus, we can now say, emphatically rejected his interpretation. Porphyry justifies his disassociation of both the pre-cosmic motion and its disorderliness from matter primarily on the claim that the *horaton*, to which Plato attributes the chaotic motion, cannot be matter if the latter is formless and shapeless. The motion must be attributed to something corporeal, specifically the fully formed elements, not just their traces, for only physical bodies can be in motion. The direct source of the motion of the elements is nature (*phusis*), the Aristotelian principle of motion and rest that Porphyry regards as independent of the elements. His description of the disorderliness of the motion harkens back to Middle Platonic doctrine: the motion is chaotic because order comes only "subsequently" upon the creation of the cosmos, which is to say, the chaos is simply the lack of order that comes "later." Porphyry's *phusis*, as we shall see, is related both conceptually and historically to Plotinus' "nature of bodies," but with a key variation: Porphyry abandons the Plotinian notion, unique among the Neoplatonists, that the disorderliness of the motion is due exclusively to matter.

To answer the question how the chaotic motion can exist before the creative activity of the Demiurge, Proclus, presumably again influenced by Porphyry, Iamblichus, or both, turns to Plato's *Statesman* myth, specifically where Plato, having removed the Demiurge from control of the cosmos, states that it is nonetheless moved by some Necessity and inherent desire (*sumphutos epithumia*) that brought disorder into the *sômatikon*, with which, in Proclus' view, Plato identifies the *horaton* of *Timaeus* 30a. The "visible," then, has a nature (*phusis*) that, prior to the creation of the cosmos, lacked God's guidance. And it is this disorderly motion caused by the corporeal nature, and not matter, that is the source of all corporeal evil.

We have called attention to Proclus' rejection of the various views of his predecessors that corporeal evil is caused by matter, natural bodies, or soul. The disorderly motion of the pre-cosmic corporeal nature, he argued, must come about entirely through the vestiges of the forms. He makes no mention of matter's reciprocal agitation of the vestiges; in fact, matter seems to play no role other than as passive receiver

of the forms.[90] Proclus explains the irrationality of the motion as the lack of articulation of the *ikhnê*, which produces varied movements in the corporeal nature. This explanation is tied to his concern, which he shared with many exegetes before him, to demonstrate against the dualists that no principle of generation is independent of the Good, and that the providential power of the divine creator must therefore reach all phases of creation, including this 'pre-cosmic' evil.[91] Thus it is through a divine source, the Paradigm, that matter receives the vestiges of the forms before the generation of the cosmos.[92] The Paradigm itself receives primal matter from the Good and produces the vestiges in it. Rational order comes to these vestiges only subsequently, through the action of the Demiurge. Before this, the vestiges were only impressions or traces that were "forerunners" of the fully articulate forms. The influence of the Paradigm covers both the pre-cosmic genesis, where it is the model for the trace-forms that combine with matter to produce the disorderly motion, as well as the ordered cosmos as a fully living being.[93] But there is at least a *prima facie* problem for Proclus in this explanation. For it seems at first blush to be logically inconsistent to declare that an intelligible principle engenders what become the sources of the irrational corporeal nature, i.e. the trace-forms. Doesn't this after all implicate the divine world in the creation of evil? Isn't Proclus simply transferring the responsibility for the pre-cosmic chaos from one god (the Demiurge) to another?[94] If it is the traces of the forms—or more precisely their lack of articulation—that cause the

[90] *ap.* John Philoponus, *De aet. mundi.* 14, 542–543 [3.16]; *DMS* c. 34; *In Tim.* I 387,8 ff. [3.8].

[91] Plato's *horaton* cannot be outside the reach of Providence since, being visible, it must be corporeal, that is, it possesses forms, although these forms are not fully articulated: *In Tim.* I 387,9–11 [3.8]. That the demiurgic Providence extends to all created things is part of Proclus' refutation of the views of Plotinus and Porphyry that the Demiurge is some form of soul, for there are some entities that do not possess soul: *In Tim.* I 306,31 ff.

[92] Cf. *In Tim.* I 388,16–19 [3.8]: the *emphaseis* of the forms come from the Model.

[93] *In Tim.* I 419,26 ff. [3.12].

[94] Particularly helpful in explicating the respective roles of the Demiurge and the Paradigm as well as their relationship to each other are Dillon (2000) and Opsomer (2000[1]) and (2000[2]). See also Deuse (1977), especially 263 ff. Of course, any Platonist who regarded the "traces" of *Timaeus* 52bff. as traces of the forms would be forced to admit that in some sense pre-cosmic matter participates in an intelligible principle. See Ferrari (1995), 90 ff., who identifies three "moments" in the generation of the world according to Plutarch: matter in itself; matter united with the primal (i.e. evil) Soul; and matter blended with the traces of the intelligible world. Cf. also Thévenaz (1938), 107, who notes that, thus, in the pre-cosmic phase of creation both some traces of the

irrationality, and so the evil, of the pre-cosmic motion, then should not at least some responsibility for that evil be assigned to the principle that is the source of the vestigial nature of the primal forms?

We must keep in mind, however, that Proclus is here availing himself of the principle that the efficacy of any cause "…extends farther down the *scala naturae* than that of its consequent."[95] Thus whatever soul causes is caused as well by Intellect, but Intellect's causal power reaches further to levels below those at which soul operates. By virtue of this principle, which assures that nothing is outside of divine causation, Proclus can claim that the One creates what is farthest removed from the divine realm, matter, and as well, as we see here, that the Paradigm, acting at a level beneath the limits of the Demiurge's causation, creates the pre-cosmic proto-body. For just as what contains forms (Intellect) cannot produce privation, so the Demiurge, who contains the forms in their full articulation, cannot generate a corporeal nature that possesses only vestiges of the forms. If we accept this reasoning, then there certainly is no greater danger of logical inconsistency in arguing that there can be an intelligible cause of something irrational (and evil) than in asserting that the One generates privation. This tenet is Proclus' only means of avoiding the pitfall, to which Plotinus had succumbed, of having to ascribe to matter some sort of active recalcitrance; it serves much the same purpose here, that is, to show that the evil consequent upon the generation of the proto-body is not caused by a principle independent of the One.

So corporeal evil, like all other types of privation, is to be explained as nothing more than the incidental by-product of the causal activity of the Paradigm. In this way Proclus once more envisions his doctrine as a compromise between two extreme views, that of "certain Platonists" (i.e. Amelius) who recognize Forms of evil and others who deny that

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intelligible world and the evil soul exist in matter without contradiction. How this can be so is not at all clear to me.

[95] This is the explanation of Dodds (1963), 231, commenting on *El. th.* Prop. 57. Cf. also de Haas (1997): according to Proclus, because (a) "higher causes are to a higher degree causative of a given product than its immediate cause" (cf. *El. th.* Prop. 56), (b) higher causes work before as well as with lower causes, and (c) "…their [*sc.* these higher causes] influence extends further down the hierarchy than the influence of lower causes…," therefore "…it is quite correct that Plato presents disorderly moving matter as already present when the Demiurge begins to work: it is the product of causes higher than the Demiurge" (15 f.). As de Haas sees it, the forms produce the traces of the elements, which in turn cause the disorderly motion. This explanation offers the Neoplatonists an alternative to the evil World Soul of Plutarch and Atticus.

evil can have paradigms, and consequently that God is limited to knowledge of the Good.[96]

From another standpoint, Proclus' defense of his theory relies in part[97] on a much-used justification familiar to all Platonists: the pre-cosmic irrationality may be due to the forms, but it is no more than a privation of order, or, in Proclus' terminology, a lack of full articulation of the trace-forms. We should therefore not consider the Paradigm to be the cause of corporeal evil. Its agency in the process of creation is exclusively the introduction of the inarticulate forms into matter, which logically must take place before the Demiurge introduces order.[98] In fact, in Proclus' universe there is no single agent of corporeal evil insofar as evil does not exist as an integral entity; corporeal evil, like other forms of evil, is rather an asymmetry, a perversion of the Good, a weakness of nature, a *parhupostasis*.[99] His overarching purpose is to prove both (a) that this evil is in some sense part of creation and thus completely subordinate to the Good, and (b) that nevertheless God is not responsible for it.[100] For if God were responsible, then there could be no cosmic creation, since the nature of the first principles would be no different from that of the last. If the Paradigm is to be free of the blame for evil, then we must agree that it is good, not just in its essence, but in its causal activities as well.[101] In the end, then, his is the familiar dilemma that is encountered by all monists in attempting to account for the existence of evil within a system that demands that the 'source' for evil come from a higher level of being in which necessarily there is no evil.

We find Proclus struggling with this problem in his analysis of *Timaeus* 28ab.[102] We might well wonder, he says, why Plato asserts that

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[96] Cf. *In Parm.* III 829,23 – 831,24 and 832–833. Cf. also *In Tim.* I 435,6ff.: Noetic beings are paradigms of what accords with nature, not what opposes it.

[97] Another determining factor is that the causality is indirect.

[98] Because the separation of the Paradigm and Demiurge is only hypothetical and the two principles actually work in unison, the forms exist in the Demiurge and so, since the Demiurge necessarily wills what is good, cannot cause evil (*DMS* cc. 43–44). Proclus makes this point as part of his argument that there is no Form of evil, although there is a Paradigm of the pre-cosmic chaos. Cf. *In Tim.* I 388,25 [3.8] (matter "shares" in the Paradigm before creation) and 419,27 [3.12].

[99] Cf. *In Tim.* I 375,6ff.; *Th. Pl.* I, pp. 84–85; *DMS* c. 48.

[100] Proclus is more concerned to show that the Demiurge, who creates according to design, is not accountable for evil than to absolve the Paradigm from blame; cf. *DMS* c. 43.

[101] Cf. Introduction, n. 57.

[102] *In Tim.* I 270,8–27.

what comes to be through the Paradigm is not beautiful (*kalon*), while what is generated from the Demiurge is. For the pre-cosmic chaos, as something visible (*horaton*) and therefore perceptible, must be a generated entity (*genêton*) that originates when matter receives certain traces of the forms from the noetic sphere before creation. And this chaos is not "simply" (*haplôs*) or unqualifiedly *kalon*, although, by contrast with the formlessness of matter, it may seem so. The *noêton* that thus "illuminates" matter is the Paradigm, whose role in creation is therefore exclusively to provide forms to matter; the (separate) Demiurge is the cause of the rational order and beauty of the cosmos.[103] But the clear implication is that there is nothing problematical in this division of the functions of the Demiurge and the Paradigm, since what the Paradigm imparts to matter, while not 'good,' is nonetheless an illumination, and the result is something superior to the utter formlessness of matter alone.[104] Again, we are to understand that the Paradigm itself is not directly responsible for the resulting chaos, for the noetic sphere produces only what is good. Proclus argues here that there are two kinds of paradigmatic causes, one operating at the intelligible level and the other in the realm of becoming; only the latter can produce what is not *kalon*.[105] So the evil of the pre-cosmic disorder is a function of causes

[103] Proclus varies from this strict demarcation of functions later (387,8–9 [3.8]) when he says that, while the Demiurge is the cause of order *simpliciter*, the Paradigm is the source for the inarticulate forms *and for the order in the forms*. Proclus is here invoking his principle of causal inclusion, whereby all of the causal powers of a being at any given level of being must be invested in the beings of the level directly above it. Commitment to this principle, as the addition of the italicized phrase indicates, forces Proclus to suggest that, despite all that he says about the pre-cosmic chaos, we must attribute at least a hint of rationality to what is supposed to be complete irrationality. So in another sense the principle at work here is that all elements of creation, including the pre-cosmic chaos as itself a *genêton* before the cosmic *genêta*, are necessarily, if not good in the strict sense of the term, at least better than what preceded their coming-to-be.

[104] Cf. 387,8 – 388,1 [3.8]: the *horaton* must be corporeal, because what is visible cannot be bodiless or without qualities. It is therefore (a) disordered, (b) possesses a quasi-shape, and (c) is superior to what lacks form.

[105] 269,4–10. De Haas (1997), 16, n. 61, misconstrues Proclus when he notes a discrepancy between Proclus' interpretation of the term *paralabôn* at *Timaeus* 30a4 as meaning that the Demiurge "takes over" chaotic matter from higher causes (cf. *In Tim.* I 387,30 – 388,9 [3.8] and III 230,13–25) and his analysis of the *Statesman* myth, where the activity is the converse; that is, "…the demiurgic activity is withdrawn and chaotic movement remains…" (*In Tim.* I 389,9–15 and *ap.* John Philoponus *De aet.mundi* 18, 606.9–607.6). There is, in fact, no conflict here insofar as Proclus, like most Platonists, sees the disorderly motion in the *Statesman* myth as the "ancient nature," or the original motion to which the Demiurge first gives order.

that derive ultimately from the noetic Paradigm, but are necessarily weaker in their distance from their source.[106]

But Proclus apparently did not feel entirely comfortable with this justification, at times reverting to a more Plotinian explanation for corporeal evil. Later in his *Timaeus* commentary (*In Tim.* I 417,27ff. [3.11]), as part of his discussion of 30c, he emphatically separates the disorderly motion from the causal activity of the Paradigm, and thus from the trace-forms. There the Paradigm's contribution to the vivification of the cosmos is exclusively the forms; on the other hand, the clear implication is that the pre-cosmic motion is to be attributed to matter alone.[107] This assertion, of course, contradicts what Philoponus tells us is Proclus' position on the issue, and what Proclus himself confirms elsewhere, that the disorderly motion must originate in the inarticulate forms, given the emptiness of matter. It is Proclus' doctrine that the forms as the Paradigm possesses them prefigure the trace-forms of the pre-cosmic proto-body such that the degree to which the trace-forms lack full articulation is inversely proportionate to the degree of unity of the forms in the Paradigm.[108] And this noetic unity is a mark of the superiority of the Paradigm to the noeric Demiurge. Yet, especially when he is concerned to demonstrate that the divine world is not responsible for evil, he seems to have found it difficult to explain precisely how, in the generation of the pre-cosmic corporeal nature, this superior unity at the level of a noetic triad translates into a lack of power on the part of the inarticulate trace-forms to control the motion they bring to matter.[109]

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[106] The Paradigm is the monad of the natures of all living things, including noeric, living, and corporeal beings, and its causal power extends to the very last order of things. Accordingly, its power manifests itself differently at different levels, growing ever weaker as it descends through the strata of being. Cf. *Th. Pl.* III 18–19 and 27, p. 99,11–12, and *In Tim.* III 106,9 – 107,13.

[107] At bit later (419,26 – 420,2 [3.12]) he does say that the Paradigm is the model both for the "disordered creation" and for the generation of the cosmos as a Living Being, so that, insofar as it possesses the forms of the elements, it is the model for the vestiges of the elements, while insofar as it is a Living Being, it is the model for the living universe. But there is no indication that the vestiges of the elements for which the Paradigm provides the model cause the disorder of the first genesis.

[108] Cf. *In Tim.* I 432,16ff.

[109] Atticus' theory of the causal role of the Paradigm is vaguely similar to that of Proclus. The two are in agreement that the forms exist independently of the Demiurge, whom Atticus identified with Intellect, the highest level of soul (on the question of whether or not Plutarch identified Intellect with the highest level of soul, see Opsomer [2001], 194ff.). And because they exist separately from the creator, he considers them

The problem that Proclus' ambivalence presents to those trying to make sense of his doctrine is compounded by evidence that, during his career, he may well have completely changed his mind on the matter. In his treatise on the eternity of the world Philoponus summarizes an argument of Proclus concerning the role of the Demiurge in the generation of the disorderly motion.[110] If the Demiurge created matter as the Receptacle of becoming, the argument goes, then either he himself also created the vestiges of the forms, which brought the disorderly motion to matter, or these vestiges came to matter from some other source—some other intelligible being who is himself a god. If the Demiurge is the source of the trace-forms, then we cannot escape the absurd conclusion that, on the one hand, he created matter to be suitable for receiving the coming-to-be of the world, but, on the other, he also gave to it the very elements—that is, the trace-forms as causes of the disorderly motion—that would make matter unreceptive to genesis. If matter is, as Plato says, the Receptacle, then it cannot militate against the imposition of order; but this is, in fact, what it must do if it is invested with chaotic motion by the trace-forms. If, however, some other intelligible being is the cause of the trace-forms, we are left with the equally absurd conclusion that the Demiurge generates matter as receptive to becoming, while this other god makes it unreceptive, so that the Demiurge is unable to generate receptivity in matter before allowing this god to make it unreceptive. That is to say, the Demiurge cannot create order without allowing an antecedent disorder.

Proclus' solution, Philoponus tells us, is once more to deny that any of this happened in time; there was no disorder that occurred literally before the coming-to-be of order. The distinction is merely conceptual. In Proclus' argument, the Demiurge did indeed both create matter as the Receptacle and create and instill within matter the trace-forms that brought to it the disorderly motion;[111] but there is no inconsistency in this insofar as 'before' and 'after' are to be understood as exclusively hypothetical terms in Plato's account. Yet, if Philoponus' summary is accurate, even this qualification did not in the end suffice for Proclus,

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only secondary causes (*paraitia*) in creation (Eusebius, *Pr. ev.*, XV, 13, 5; p. 815d35 – 816b2 Viger = frg. 9, p. 69). Cf. Baltes (1983), 42.

[110] *De aet. mundi* 14, 1, p. 539,1 – 540,17 [3.17].

[111] 543,6–14; cf. also 3.16. This is basically a view of Middle Platonism; Alcinous, *Didask.* 12. 2, similarly asserts that God brings both disorder to matter by introducing into it the trace-forms and order through the exercise of its providential powers. It is also likely the position of Apuleius; cf. *De Plat.* 192–196.

since in his surviving works both of the actions here attributed to the Demiurge—the creation of matter and the imbuing of matter with the trace-forms—are given to the Good and the Paradigm, respectively, and are regarded as "events" that happen "before" any sort of demiurgic creation. Still, he is left with a theory of creation that in important respects resembles one of the absurd situations that, as Philoponus relates, he repudiated: one god, the Demiurge, makes matter receptive to becoming while a second intelligible god, the Paradigm, makes it unreceptive. Proclus must have been sensitive to the fact that some would find these two events incompatible, even if it is allowed that they occur non-temporally.

Conclusion

Thus what in earlier theories are regarded as independent principles that exist prior to creation—matter and the disorderly motion—become for the Neoplatonists after Plotinus products of powers that are superior to the Demiurge and so part of the very chain of being to which the Demiurge belongs. The corporeal nature, which as matter set in a disorderly motion represents for Proclus the agent of bodily evil, does from a purely conceptual standpoint pre-exist (although only as the byproduct of the formation of the corporeal through the agency of the Paradigm) and thus is to be distinguished from the creative energy of the Demiurge, yet it does not fall outside of the demiurgic Providence.

Corporeal evil, then, for Proclus as for Porphyry, is reduced to a lack of order, a sort of privation. Both recognized the difference between this privation or disorder and that found in matter. The privation peculiar to matter, Proclus says, is its lack of measure, of shape and of limit, which is not such as to oppose measure, shape, or limit, or to constitute the elimination of them; matter that lacks all qualification is a lack such that its own lack is a lack.

In linking the *Statesman* myth with *Timaeus* and so interpreting bodily evil or the pre-cosmic corporeal nature of the *Statesman* myth as a proto-body in irrational flux, Proclus remains squarely within the Platonic tradition of exegesis of Plato. And in keeping with that tradition he reads the myth as further substantiation of Plato's view that evil is not—indeed cannot be—eradicated in the creation of the world. The disorder is mastered, but not eliminated, by the harmonizing power of

reason. The unique contribution of the post-Plotinian Neoplatonism of Porphyry, Iamblichus, and Proclus is its fully developed doctrine formulated to demonstrate that corporeal evil, whether in its hypothetically pre-cosmic state as a proto-body or as part of the physical cosmos, is never truly divorced from the divine realm.

Proclus ends his analysis of evil in *DMS* with a response to one of the most perplexing questions related to the problem of its existence: how and through what agency can evil exist in the face of divine Providence? Two possible solutions to this 'contradiction,' (a) that if evil does exist, then certain aspects of the world do not come under the purview of Providence and (b) that if all things are in the control of Providence, then evil cannot exist, Proclus dismisses as untenable.[112] If evil were absolute, then the first of these solutions would be plausible. But evil has only a qualified—that is, parhupostatic—existence, and thus, Proclus feels, we are justified in claiming that at the same time the reach of divine Providence over all things is complete (*DMS* c. 58).[113] The philosophical defense of this position, we can now say, he drew from the commentaries of Porphyry and Iamblichus, in particular their stratification of the phases of creation. By making the "corporeal generation" (*sômatourgikê genêsis*) merely a subdivision of the demiurgic generation that "precedes" the "ordering generation" (*kosmêtikê genêsis*), they bring corporeal evil under the same governing principles that introduce order to the physical world and guide it providentially. This relationship between corporeal evil and the divine realm allows Proclus to argue, as he does in the last chapter of his treatise on evil, that corporeal evil is, in one sense, caused by divine principles, yet these principles do not engender evil *as evil*, but only *as good*. In other words, to the extent that the disordered bodies are in motion and thus possess some degree of being, we can say that corporeal evil comes from above; to the extent that they are disordered, it derives from "causes" whose "…generation is not due to some power, but which exist through weakness," that is, privation.[114]

Proclus thereby challenges the position of the dualists at its core by denying both that there is a separate pre-existing principle that could

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[112] Cf. Opsomer and Steel (1999[2]).

[113] Cf. Baltes (1976), 146ff. and Dodds (1963), 209. Baltes, 152, n. 262, suggests that Porphyry may have been influenced by the Chaldaean Oracles in his interpretation of *Timaeus* 30a; cf. Lewy (1956), 117f.

[114] To the question whether or not God wills the existence of evil, Proclus answers that both are true. Since evil has a certain existence, God willed it to exist insofar as he

challenge the supremacy of the Good and that evil is in any way the product of soul's activity. These arguments are to be understood within the larger framework of Proclus' doctrine, formulated most extensively in the *DMS*, that there cannot be two first principles, one of which is good and the other evil, and that therefore, if all things are generated from a single principle that is the Good, nothing that exists can be absolutely evil.[115] He accepts Plutarch's contentions (a) that the disordered motion of *Timaeus* 30a is the source of corporeal evil in the world, (b) that, by its nature, matter cannot be the source of evil, and (c) that therefore Plato's disordered motion is not to be identified with matter. What he rejects is the idea that this motion is to be identified with some pre-existent soul that operates in active opposition to the Good. He repudiates as well the Pythagorean dualism of Numenius according to which divine Providence simply co-exists with the evil of matter in enduring conflict, each having its own cause, Providence being the product of the creative activity of the Demiurge and evil the outcome of chance.[116] For it is the hallmark of Proclus' doctrine that even the principle of all evil must have a share in the Good.

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wished to impart being to all things and all things come from the demiurgic cause. But he did not will its existence to the extent that he wills to make all things good (*In Tim.* I 379,26ff.).

[115] Cf. *DMS* c. 10.

[116] *ap.* Calcidius, *In Tim.* cc. 297–298.

CHAPTER FOUR

IRRATIONAL NATURE

Texts

4.1 [*DMS* c. 27, pp. 206,1 – 207,5] And so we must consider nature itself and those beings whose whole being and existence is from nature, whether or not there is evil in these as well, and through what cause. We neither say nor think that the nature of the All, or any other nature of an eternal body, can in any way depart from its own state, but remains what it is: to govern the body according to nature. For what other function does a nature have than to preserve the subject in which it resides and to maintain it always? But this is a function of all causes. The particular nature, however, when it controls the underlying matter, "rightly and prudently governs" (*Laws* 897d2–3), but when it is controlled as a particular nature and employs corresponding rational principles, then we say that it does what opposes what is proper to it. For nothing of a universal nature is contrary to nature; all rational principles come from it. But for a particular nature, one thing will be in accordance with its nature while another will not. For each being there is something different that opposes its nature. If the form of a lion were to be generated in the nature of a man, that is against nature, since there was no rational principle for this form internal to his nature, nor, in turn, are rational principles for any forms other than that of a man alone intrinsic to it. For man the rational principles of other things are alien, and the same is true of all beings whose rational principles are different with respect to form. It is therefore characteristic of this nature to be controlled and to act against its nature, but not of the universal nature nor of that of any of the eternal beings. For matter which underlies non-eternal beings, because it is held by the bonds of nature, adorns and, as it were, illuminates its own shadows and lack of form and dresses them in a foreign ornamentation. And so in the universals ugliness is hidden. That is why, even if it exists from the beginning, it is not known by all, nor even by those who have uncovered many of the secrets of nature. Since the particular

nature is powerless, both because of its lack of substantial power—for it is like a ray or impression of the universal nature—and a divided rational principle that comes from there and flows down into the body, unable to remain pure, and, in turn, because of the very power of the opposites that encompass it entirely—for there are many things that are external and foreign to the mortal nature—so, as we said, taking on this weakness and giving authority to its own ugliness, it interrupts its activities and by its own lack of form renders dark the light that comes from it. And what is ugly by nature, since reason does not govern it, is a passion, and it is disordered, since order is powerless [over it]. Then reason is controlled by what is worse and is itself made irrational.

4.2 [*DMS* c. 28, p. 207,1–26] So if nature reveals itself to be unhindered in its activity, we shall find that all things are in accordance with nature and there is no evil in them. But if there is one end of nature and a path in accordance with nature, but also another power that opposes it and hinders nature, and if there is one power of reason, but what oppose it are infinite in number, what else shall we say than that this is the faultiness [*malitia*] of nature? For to the person for whom contemplation is a good, its privation is an evil; while to the person for whom action directed externally and activity in accordance with nature [are good], it is an evil when reason does not triumph and its activity, because overcome by what is worse, does not realize its end. But we must consider it the faultiness of bodies when the forms over them can be overcome by what is worse: both physical ugliness when reason is overcome and illness when order breaks down. Since there is beauty when form wins out, spread over the forms like a flower, while it is a matter of health when the natural order is unchanged. Just as we said with regard to nature, this faultiness extends to material bodies and individual entities, but not to what exists as wholes; nor should we accept that it extends to immaterial entities. For when is ugliness outside of matter itself, which we usually call ugliness itself and the last nature because it lacks measure and beauty and possesses not even a feeble light? And when is disorder and what opposes nature a part of those things that are always in agreement with nature which, because their nature always dominates, possess well-being that does not change? So individual bodies, which when in matter experience all sorts of changes, at certain times possess order and the good and at others the opposite conditions dominate

their nature. But what is not individual, that which necessarily both remains as a whole and completes the world, always possesses the order that conquers disorder.

4.3 [*DMS* c. 57, p. 256,1–12] In so many ways, then, are we to divide evil, because the measures of beings are contained in these three principles: nature, soul, and intellect, and what lacks measure is the privation of those forming-principles in nature, of those in soul, or of those that are in intellect and generated from it. For what in a primal way brings order to particular things is better than what are brought into order; I mean the sort of primacy belonging to the ordering principles of anything, such as nature in bodies, or reason in the irrational forms of life, or in rational souls the good that is superior to them. And for the forms of souls [the measure comes] either because of the higher soul, insofar as they are dependent on such a soul, or because of an external principle, from which derives the good that comes to those things subject to Providence. But certain bodies [possess this principle] from a particular nature, others from a universal nature.

4.4 [*In Tim.* I 8,5–9] And nature (*phusis*) itself, which guides (*podêgetousa*) the All, derives from the gods, and is inspired (*empneomenê*) by them, guides the corporeal nature (*to sômatoeides*) and neither exists as a god nor is devoid of divine properties through its illumination from those who are really gods.

4.5 [*In Tim.* I 9,31 – 12,25] But come, since the term 'nature,' because it is used in different senses by different people, confuses those who are fond of studying the thought of Plato, both with regard to how he construes it and what he wants its essence to be, let us deal with this first. For it would probably be fitting in the case of the dialogue which has the theory of nature for its topic to know what nature is and from what source it comes and how far its productive activities extend. For some of the ancient exegetes define nature as matter, such as Antiphon; others as form, such as Aristotle on many occasions; others as the Whole [universal], such as some of those who came before Plato, concerning whom he reported in *Laws* [892b] that they named entities that exist by nature "natures;" others as natural powers, as for example heaviness, lightness, porousness, and solidity, such as some of the Peripatetics and other philosophers of nature still more ancient; others called nature the craft (*tekhnê*) of God; others soul; and others some other such

thing. But Plato did not deem it appropriate in the first place to name nature matter or form in matter or body or the powers that are natural, and at the same time he resisted naming it soul, but situating its essence in between both of these—I mean between soul and the corporeal powers—since it is subordinate to that [*sc.* soul] by virtue of its being divided among bodies and not being directed toward it [*sc.* soul], but superior to [the corporeal powers] that come after it by virtue of possessing the rational principles of all things and producing and bringing to life all things, he has offered to us the most accurate analysis of it. For according to our common notions nature is one thing and what is according to nature and by nature another. Moreover, the product of a craft is different in relation to the craft. And intellective soul (*psukhê noera*) is one thing and nature another. For nature belongs to bodies by entering into them and being inseparable from them, while soul is separable, is established in itself,[1] and belongs at the same time to itself and to another, to another because its is participated [*sc.* by another], but to itself because it does not incline toward what participates in it; just as the Father of the soul belongs solely to himself because he is unparticipated, and, if you wish, before this [*sc.* Father] the intelligible Paradigm of the entire cosmos itself… [11,3] But of these nature which is inseparable from those bodies is one thing, while soul which exists in itself and illuminates a second life for something else is another, and the demiurgic Intellect who "abides in his own proper state" [*Timaeus* 42e] is another, and the intelligible cause of all things that is paradigmatic of what is created by the Demiurge, which Plato for this reason deemed it right to call also the "self-living," is another. Therefore nature is the last of the causes that fashion this bodily and perceptible nature (*to sômatoeides touto kai aisthêton*) and the limit of the breadth of the incorporeal essences, filled with rational principles and powers through which it guides (*kateuthunei*) what is contained within the cosmos, and is a god, but possessing its being as a god by escaping and not remaining in the same place—for we call divine bodies gods insofar as they are images of the gods—and guiding (*podêgetousa*) the entire cosmos by its own powers and embracing the heaven by its own summit, steering generation through the heaven, and altogether weaving particulars together with wholes… Dependent upon that realm and suspended from it, it permeates all things without obstruction and inspires (*empnei*) all things.

[1] Reading *hautêi* for Diehl's *autêi*.

Because of it even what lacks soul participates in a soul of a sort, and things perishable remain everlastingly in the cosmos, embraced by the causes of the forms in it… [12,10] And all of those who have said that nature is a demiurgic craft (*tekhnên dêmiourgikên*), if they mean the craft that remains in the Demiurge himself, do not speak correctly; but if they mean that which goes forth from him, they do speak correctly. For we should conceive of a threefold craft, one, belonging to the Craftsman, that does not go forth, another that goes forth from him but reverts back to him, and another that has already advanced forward and become part of another thing. Therefore the craft that is within the Demiurge remains part of him and is the Demiurge himself, and with respect to it he is called "Craftsman of deeds" and "Craftsman of the fiery cosmos" by the oracles. The intellective soul is a craft, but one that at the same time remains at rest and ventures forth. But nature [is a craft] that ventures forth only. Hence it is also referred to as the organ (*organon*) of the gods, not lifeless and moved only by an external cause, but in a sense possessing self-motion by virtue of the fact that it acts through itself. For the organs of the gods have their essence in active principles, are alive, and are connected to their activities.

4.6 [*In Tim.* I 165,23–27] But the divine Iamblichus, having rejected these interpreters because they did not adequately preserve the analogy, interprets the "war" as that power that eradicates entirely the disorderly, discordant, and material nature (*tês ataktou kai plêmmelous kai enhulou phuseôs*), while "wisdom" is the immaterial and separable intellection …

4.7 [*In Tim.* I 261,25–27] He [Plato] added "some" [in reference to the statement in *Timaeus* 28a that all that comes into existence necessarily has some cause] since the Intellect of the All, the soul, and nature (*phusis*) are said to be productive…

4.8 [*In Tim.* I 382,20–30] But they [Porphyry, Iamblichus, and their school] maintain that Plato, wishing to reveal that the Providence that extends from the Demiurge down into the All and the directing power from Intellect and the presence of soul are causes of some many and so diverse good principles in the cosmos, first investigates the whole corporeal structure (*tên holên sômatoeidê sustasin*) by itself, how it is discordant and disorderly (*plêmmelês kai ataktos*), so that, once you have seen the

order that derives from soul and the demiurgic organization in itself, you might be able to distinguish what sort of nature (*phusis*) the corporeal is in itself, as well as what sort of organization it has received from the demiurgic creation.

4.9 [*In Tim.* I 389,5–16] …[T]he hypothetical account shows that the phrase "[all that is visible] does not rest, but moves…" refers to the fact that he has given to it [i.e. the visible] nature (*phusis*) alone, from which comes the motion. For what sort of cosmic order could nature, being irrational and not being guided by God, preserve? This is clear also in *Statesman* (272e). For having removed the Demiurge from the cosmos, he says that it is moved by "some Fate and connate desire in it." Hypothesizing that what is there after creation is here before creation, he introduced disorder into the motion of the visible that comes to be without intelligence. And it is the same here.

4.10 [*In Tim.* I 401,25–30] Thus He [*sc.* the Demiurge] makes the All intelligent, [and] gives it a share in soul. For soul proceeds from Intellect. Thus he renders the cosmos animated (*empsukhon*), [and] endows with life what was formerly in discordant and disorderly motion (*plêmmelês kinoumenôi kai ataktôs*). For this [the All], once in good order (*kalôs takhthen*), will be able to share in soul, soul in Intellect, and Intellect in Beauty, the entire cosmos having become supremely beautiful [by sharing in] the Good.

4.11 [*In Tim.* I 417,27–32] For [the cosmos] has its existence as a living being because of what is intellectual, not because of the discordant and disorderly motion (*to plêmmelôs kai ataktôs kinoumenon*). Everything comes to be in the All either due to matter or due to form. So if the cosmos is not a living being because of the substrate, then it possesses its existence as a living being because of form. And if because of form, then what is a living being in the primary sense is the cause of its form.

4.12 [*In Tim.* III 270,16 – 271,25] How does the Demiurge show the nature of the All (*tên tou pantos phusin*) to them [*sc.* souls]? It is by turning them towards the cosmos and preparing them to behold the rational principles in nature. But this is to make them worse and to turn them from the separable rational principles toward the inseparable principles of sensible entities. But the Demiurge on the contrary leads souls up to the intelligible realm, turns them toward himself, separates them from

matter, and fills them with divine powers and thoughts of creation. He therefore turns souls toward himself since he does not have the cause of nature in himself. For indeed anyone who reveals [anything] looks exclusively at what he is revealing. And so the Demiurge as well, if he reveals nature to souls, looks at nature. But he looks solely at the principles that precede him as well as at himself. Therefore he has in himself the unitary principles and has set the powers in himself over the generation of other things, including nature; and, just as he has grasped bodies in an incorporeal manner, so he also embraces nature in a supernatural manner. Such things are, then, correctly stated. But we must also speak in another context, not only philosophically placing form in the Demiurge, but also, as the theologians teach, envisioning nature at first pre-existing intellectively in the life-bearing divinity [*sc.* the Paradigm]. For suspended from there [nature] also guides (*kateuthunei*) this visible cosmos, harmonizing the rational principles in matter with those outside of matter, raising the corporeal motions up to those that are productive first, and establishing a dependence of the cosmic order upon the intellective order…. It [nature] goes forth from there toward the demiurgic Intellect, and souls must see the sources and roots of nature so that they might look upon both their own rank and the universal order upon which they are dependent, and grasping that [*sc.* nature] they might contemplate the All. For "gazing upon" this very nature they harmonize themselves to Fate. So, just as the Demiurge himself, by having grasped the Paradigm of nature, guides (*kateuthunei*) the All, so he wills that souls as well, by looking upon the first, intellective cause of nature, "both mount upward and direct the entire cosmos" (*Phaedrus* 246c). For this is the supreme lot of souls. So [the Demiurge] shows to souls that nature that is original and pre-exists in the universal, life-bearing goddess according to the tradition of the gods themselves, which they have handed down to their initiates.

4.13 [*In Tim.* III 273,19 – 274,2] Plato alone recognized its [*sc.* Fate's] essence, calling it nature (*phusis*), but deriving from the Demiurge. For how does the Demiurge reveal nature other than by having its principle within himself? How doe he relate "the laws of Fate" after having shown [to souls] the nature of the All [other] than by bringing into existence the one nature that embraces these laws? Even more clearly in *Statesman* [272e] he makes the second life of the All dependent upon Fate after removing from it both the one divinity who governs it and

the many divinities who attend this one divinity; by these means he removes from it [*sc.* the cosmos] all of Providence that pertains to these divinities and leaves only the governance according to Fate—the cosmos always possesses both [*sc.* lives], but the myth separates the first from the second. "Fate and the connate desire turned [the revolutions of] the cosmos backward," he says…

4.14 [*In Parm.* III, 792,17 – 794,26] [On what it is that produces the individual human being] Certainly the visible form of the mother does not create the new-born infant, but nature, being an incorporeal power and the principle of motion, as we say. If, therefore, nature transforms the reason-principles of the sperm from what is potential to fully actualized formation, then this (nature) would possess the reason-principles in actuality; so, although it is both irrational and without imagination, it nevertheless is the cause of the reason-principles in natural beings. So does the nature of humans possess the human reason-principles, but the nature in a lion not those of the lion, such as the head, the mane, the feet, and the other parts of the lion? …(Nature) would not be capable of molding in a uniform manner such a diversity of formation, especially since it is in its essence irrational. But, then, does nature possess the reason-principles in animals, but not in plants? No, the order of their generation and the lives of plants reveal how they are actualized according to assigned causes…[793,5] But finally let us ascend to the one nature, that of the earth, which generates all things in like manner, "as many as breathe or crawl on the earth" (*Odyssey* 18, 131)… [16] For as we rise in this way we shall discover the nature in each rank embracing the living beings therein, and the nature in the moon (embracing) the kinds in all of them; since from there all generation is governed, and in it the transcendent monad of enhylic natures is anticipated. And so having made our ascent through the spheres toward that we shall finally arrive at the nature of the All, and we shall inquire about it whether it possesses the Forms or not, and we shall force our respondent to agree that in it are also contained the reason-principles—the creative and kinetic powers—of all visible things. For all things that are actualized through inferior powers exist in a stronger and more perfect manner through more universal powers. Thus, as mother of all things, the nature of the All embraces the reason-principles of all things, especially since otherwise it would be absurd that the craft that imitates the reason-principles in nature creates in accordance with the reason-principles, but (nature) itself is without reason-principles and

without inherent measures. But if it is the case that nature possesses the reason-principles, then necessarily there is some other cause before it that embraces the Forms. For nature, entering into bodies, creates in them in the same way that you would imagine a craftsman becoming involved with his wood, hollowing it out from within, straightening, boring, and shaping it. Such is the experience of nature, entering into bodies, dwelling in their masses, and breathing into them from within her reason-principles and movement. Those things that are moved externally were in need of some such cause which, in the first place, was properly irrational so that it might not be separated from bodies that require in indwelling cause, and secondly properly possessed their reason-principles so that it could preserve all things within their limits and move all things fittingly. Thus nature belongs to other things and not to itself, lacking reason in accordance with its proper order. The highest cause must transcend its products; and so, by as much as the creative power transcends what it creates, to this extent it creates what is purer and more perfect. And generally, if nature is irrational, it needs something to guide it. There is, then, something else even before nature that possesses the reason-principles upon which all things in the cosmos are necessarily dependent.

4.15 [*In Parm.* VI, 1045,26 – 1046,13] Similarly, if we should seek, as it were, the root of all bodies, from which grew what is in heaven and under the moon, both the wholes and parts, we would say, and not unreasonably so, that this is nature, being the principle of motion and of rest for all bodies, which is ensconced in them as they move or are at rest (by nature I mean the one life that extends throughout [or, perhaps, is proper to] the entire cosmos, participating in generation after Intellect and soul and through Intellect and soul), and it is (the principle) rather than one of the many particular things. Nevertheless this is not a principle in the strict sense, since it is itself in possession of a multitude of powers, and through its different (powers) guides the different parts of the All… But if we must find that one principle, we should ascend to the most unified part of nature and its 'flower,' insofar as even nature is a god, which both is dependent on its source and encompasses the All, unifies it, and brings it into harmony with itself. So that is the One, the principle of all generation for the many powers of nature, for the particular natures, and in sum for all things that are governed by nature.

4.16 [*Th. Pl.* I 20, p. 95,2–10] For nature is divided among bodies and sinks as far as the corporeal masses and projects many powers around the compound that underlies it, and it is in itself simpler than bodies, but possesses an essence that is mixed with the variety in them (*sc.* bodies). Nor is it like the psychic form. For the soul, existing as "intermediate between the undivided Essence and the Essence that is divided among bodies" (*Timaeus* 35a1–3), is connected to both of these extremes…

4.17 [*Th. Pl.* V 6, pp. 24,23 – 25,19] It is therefore reasonable that this All as well possesses two sorts of lives, periods, and revolutions, that of Cronos and that of Zeus, as the myth in *Statesman* maintains. In one of the periods [the All] spontaneously generates all good things and possesses a propitious and unwearied life. But in the other period it shares in both material discordance (*tês hulikês plêmmeleias*) and a constantly changing nature (*tês polumetabolou phuseôs*). Because there are two sorts of lives in the cosmos, one that is invisible and more on the level of intellect and that other that is more on the level of nature and visible, and the former defined by Providence, but the latter proceeding in a disorderly manner in accordance with Fate (*kath' heimarmenên ataktôs proiousês*), the latter, being secondary, diverse, and coming to realization through nature (*dia tês phuseôs*), is dependent upon the order of Zeus, while the former, being simpler, noeric, and invisible, [depends upon] the order of Cronos. The Eleatic Stranger teaches this clearly when he refers to the first of the revolutions as that of Zeus and the other as that of Cronos [272b1–3]. Surely Zeus is cause of the invisible life of the All, is the dispenser of intellect, and is the leader of the intellective perfection; but he leads all things up to the kingdom of Cronos and, being leader with his father, brings into existence the whole peri-cosmic Intellect. And if it is necessary to speak the truth explicitly, each of the two periods—I mean the visible and the invisible—shares in both of these gods, but one is more that of Cronos, while the other is subject to the kingdom of Zeus.

4.18 [*Th. Pl.* V 25, p. 93,23–28] With regard to the second of the two periods about which we have spoken, the cosmos moves itself in a motion that is in accord with its own nature and fulfills the order of Fate. But the first cause of the cosmic movement and of that life is the god who illuminates the power of cosmic movement and life, the very great Zeus.

4.19 [*Th. Pl.* V 25, p. 95,17–21] But in this revolution that belongs more to the level of nature and is known by all, "Fate" and "the innate desire" [*Statesman* 272e6] move the All, but Zeus is in a transcendent sense the cause of this movement, he who gives both Fate and the acquired life to the cosmos.

4.20 [*De prov.* c. 11, pp. 116–117 (154–155)] …And regarding our bodies first, let us see what it is that moves, nourishes, ever renews, and controls them. Is this not the nutritive element (*to phutikon/quod plantativum*)? With its twofold activity it offers to other living beings as well, even as far as those beings rooted in the earth, a similar usefulness. On the one hand it renews that part of bodies that has ceased to exist, so it might not disappear, scattered everywhere. It is also the power of coherence in that part of individual beings that is in accordance with nature. For filling a deficiency and preserving the power of coherence are not the same thing. If, then, before [the existence of] bodies the one nature (*phusis*) of the cosmos exists not only in us as well as other living beings and plants, but also in this entire cosmos, being the cohering and motive power of their structure, just as it is in us—or in what sense do we mean that all bodies are the products of nature?—then nature is necessarily the cause of the connections, and in this we must seek what is called Fate. And perhaps for this reason the god-like Aristotle used to call the increases and generations that were beyond the accustomed time "beyond Fate." And the divine Plato says that "corporeal Fate and the connate desire (*sumphutos epithumia/complantatam concupiscentiam*) made the whole world, considered in itself apart from the intelligible gods, turn backwards" [*Statesman* 272e]. And along with these statements the gods give an answer, "Do not look upon nature," they say, "its name is Fate," which confirms our arguments.

4.21 [*De prov.* c. 12, p. 118 (156)] In this way we have found what Fate is and how the nature of this cosmos is some incorporeal essence, insofar as it is the protector (*prostatês/preses*) of bodies, and a life along with an essence, if it moves bodies internally and not externally, moving all things in time and connecting the movements of those beings that are apart temporally and spatially. Through it mortal beings are connected to eternal beings and are embraced by them, and they share experiences with each other. Moreover, the nature in us binds together all the parts of our body and connects their productions to each other; and this is a sort of Fate that belongs to our body. And, just as in this [*sc.*

body] both the more and less dominant parts subsist, and the latter obey the former, so surely in the entire cosmos the generations of the less dominant parts obey the motions of the more dominant parts, as, for example, the generations of things under the sun follow the periods of the heavens…

Analysis

Introduction

In the previous chapter we found that in certain contexts Proclus attributes a particular role in the generation of the disorderly motion to an irrational nature (*alogos phusis*): nature "inspires" the disorderly motion in the "corporeal" before the latter participates in the ordering powers of intellect and soul, that is, before it becomes a fully formed body. The contribution of this *phusis* is more fully worked out in other passages to which we shall now turn our attention. We shall find that this irrational nature is in the Platonic tradition closely related both to that part of the mortal form of soul that Blumenthal has labeled the "sub-sensitive soul" and, much to the consternation of the Peripatetics,[2] to Aristotle's nutritive soul, and that Platonists appropriated that term from the Stoics. In fact, it will become clear that Proclus' assessment of the role of nature in the generation of evil is the result of a long history of development of a Platonist theory of nature that draws principally from Stoicism, and to a lesser extent from Aristotle as well as, in the case of Proclus at least, from Orphism and the Chaldaean Oracles. The concept of *phusis* in the sense that Proclus gives it serves an important function in the history of Platonic doctrines of evil, that is, to help Platonists parry certain objections levied against their cosmogonies by their opponents, especially the Aristotelians.

Proclus on Nature I

At *DMS* c. 34 Proclus, paraphrasing *Statesman* 273b, says that the Eleatic Stranger cites as the cause of disorder in the universe and of all that comes into conflict with the production of good in the world a "sub-

[2] Cf. Alexander of Aphrodisias, *De anima libri mant.* p. 118, 12 Bruns.

strate nature" (*subiecta natura* = *hupokeimenê phusis*), which he identifies with an "anterior state," a reference to the "ancient nature" that preceded the establishment of order in the universe. The Stranger employs this terminology to refer to the disorderly motion and the "corporeal" nature (*sômatikon*), the pre-cosmic state that cannot be controlled by the forms and that survives in the created world as the irrational nature in composite entities (*DMS* cc. 28–29 [4.2]). Part of what the myth reveals, then, is that the natures of physical bodies are bifurcated, so that, in concept at least, each body possesses two natures that are instilled in it by different causes. One nature, contributed by the Demiurge and so, properly speaking, the 'true' nature of the body, is the principle of all that is good in it; the other is the remnant of the "ancient state" that guarantees the continuation of evil in the physical world (c. 55). The former part plays a causal role in the coming-to-be of the world, engendering bodies through "necessity and self-movement" (c. 58) and in addition serving as the agent of their preservation (c. 27 [4.1]). For its part, in its manifestation in bodies, the "evil" nature is a mirror image of what it was as the pre-corporeal disorderly motion: a weakness and a defect or privation of form (c. 28 [4.2]; c. 56–57 [4.3]). Proclus here appropriates an exegetical device, traceable to Middle Platonism, whereby Plato's *sômatikon* is given a special meaning that is largely shaped by Peripatetic[3] and Stoic concepts of *phusis* and that thereby presents to Platonists a principle that allows them sufficiently to explain the self-motion of the disordered corporeal, without being forced, as Plutarch and Atticus had thought all Platonists were forced, to posit a primal Soul that is evil. For it is clear from c. 57 [4.3]—as well as elsewhere, as we shall see—that nature is a power distinct from, although closely related to, soul.[4] Each is an agent of demiurgic creation con-

[3] Aristotelian influence is immediately evident in his definition of nature as the principle of motion and rest (c. 55) and of the preservation of natural bodies.

[4] We cannot be certain how much of this analysis of nature Proclus drew from Iamblichus, since it is not quite clear what Iamblichus' position on the subject was. The available evidence would seem to point to the fact that Proclus' view is at least similar to that of Iamblichus. Iamblichus, along with Porphyry, is said to have acknowledged a confused and disorderly "corporeal structure" (*sômatoeidos sustasis*) that is independent, apparently of soul and the creative activity of the Demiurge, and to have referred to it as nature (Proclus, *In Tim.* I 382,12ff. = frg. 37 and cf. *In Tim.* I 165,16ff. = frg. 21). Moreover, he held that nature is inseparable from matter (*ap.* Stobaeus I 5, 81,8ff.). However, he also claimed that soul is the principle (*arkhê*) of nature (*ap.* Stobaeus II 7,43, p. 111,26) and that nature produces the irrational soul (*De myst.* 8, 6 [269,1], p. 199 Des Places).

taining principles of order, but nature belongs more properly to bodies[5] and so is a principle of self-motion below that of soul, and thus of life. But of course, for Proclus to speak of a soulless entity that is nonetheless self-moving and possesses generative powers, is, coming as it does from a Platonist, both remarkable and puzzling. Moreover, what precisely Plato meant by the term had in fact become by Proclus' time a topic of some controversy and even confusion.

1. The Irrational Nature as Sub-Psychic

We turn to Proclus' commentary of *Timaeus* to gauge more precisely his idea of the relationship of nature to the soul. We have already seen that in his discussion of the disorderly motion there Proclus at times refers to the cause of the pre-cosmic disorderly motion as an irrational nature (*alogos phusis*).[6] This nature does not have a divine source (*ou theothen*), so that the movement that it produces is devoid of intelligence. There Proclus identifies it with "Fate" and the "inherent desire" (*epithumia emphutos*) that in Plato's *Statesman* myth ruled the cosmos when the Demiurge was removed. After the demiurgic generation the world retains its nature, now transformed, when the cosmos gains intelligence and noeric life. Here *phusis* denotes a stage of creation falling between lifeless matter and the coming-to-be of living beings. Although lifeless in itself, he says elsewhere,[7] it is *potential* life, a term clearly meant to convey its intermediate status. In Plato's hypothetical account, it operates before soul becomes active in creation. Proclus construes Plato's phrase in 30a as evidence that Plato gave to the pre-cosmic condition "nature only, from which the motion arose." That is to say, without demiurgic Providence the proto-body possesses self-motion alone, which is what Plato means by the phrase "inherent desire" in *Statesman*, so that it falls

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[5] *…dico autem prime le ornantium unumquodque: tale autem in corporibus quidem natura…* (p. 256,6 f.) Cf. *In Tim.* I 261,26 f. [4.7]; 8 ff.; *In Parm.* VI, 1045,26 ff. [4.15] for Intellect, soul, and nature. This distinction may have begun with Porphyry; cf. *Sent.* 8 and 12.

[6] *In Tim.* I 389,5–16 [4.9]; see also 394,24–25. Baltes (1978), 92 ff., incorrectly notes a "tension" between the former passage, where, as he sees it, the disorderly motion is said to be caused by a natural impulse, and 387,14 ff., where Proclus attributes it to the traces of the forms.

[7] Cf. *Th. Pl.* III 10, p. 41 6–8: that which originates from the "first of the forms" and from primary matter is in itself lifeless, but possesses life potentially. The language that Proclus chooses to express the manner in which the trace-forms enter into matter through the agency of nature reflects in part certain theological concerns associated with theurgy. Cf. *In Parm.* 847, 218.

short of being a living thing. Plato imbues nature with at least one of the defining attributes of soul, self-motion, but it is still clearly inferior to psychic life because of its irrationality. There are two, rather obvious reasons for understanding Plato in this manner. First, while the motion of the proto-body is self-caused through its own *phusis*, we must not, despite Plato's claim elsewhere (*Phaedrus*) that only soul is self-moved, conclude that its nature is therefore soul, for then we have nothing less than the dualistic doctrine of Plutarch and Atticus. There is no irrational *soul* that causes the disorderly motion, Proclus says in refutation of Atticus, for every soul is the creation of the gods and therefore cannot be implicated in the generation of evil.[8] Moreover, bodies are in need of such a cause as nature, that is, one that is external to them but is irrational as well, so that it might work from within them (*In Parm.* III, 794 [cf. 4.14]). And the fact that Proclus' appeal to the *Statesman* myth looks suspiciously like a response to Plutarch's use of the same text to show that his evil soul is the source of the pre-cosmic motion[9] strongly suggests that Proclus' *alogos phusis* is a deliberate substitution for Plutarch's *psukhê ouk ekhousa logon* and that he expected his readers to understand by *phusis* something distinctively other than the Plutarchan *psukhê*. Secondly, life begins for Proclus with the demiurgic generation, and so it is at the second of the two stages of creation that soul's life-giving powers first come into play.[10] It was established doctrine by this time that the Demiurge did not simply bestow form on empty matter, but encountered a corporeal state that already possessed to some degree form and movement.[11] Nonetheless it was not at this point alive.

The status of the irrational nature is even more clearly laid out at the beginning of his commentary on Plato's *Timaeus*. There Proclus notes that, in the study of a dialogue whose topic is the investigation of physical matters, it behooves the exegete to determine what nature (*phusis*) is, whence it derives, and how far into reality its activities extend.[12] These questions become most pressing given the many competing definitions of the term among the commentators. Some of the ancients, Proclus explains, say the nature is matter (Antiphon), others that it is form (Aris-

[8] *In Tim.* I 394,9–10.

[9] *De an. procr.* 1015A, p. 150,7–16.

[10] Cf. *In Tim.* I 401,27f. [4.10]: the Demiurge brings soul to the cosmos, instilling life in what was before in a chaotic and disorderly motion. Cf. also 383,6f.

[11] Cf. Blumenthal 's (1996) chapter on the sub-sensitive soul. See also Dillon (1973), 372, n. 3 and Dodds (1963), 316f. for other references.

[12] I 8,7ff. Cf. *El. th.* 21–22 and Dodds' (1963), 209, comments.

totle, often), others that it is the Whole (certain Platonists), and so on. For Platonists at least, perhaps the most controversial doctrine, which Proclus includes at the end of his list, held that nature is soul. He denies that Plato's nature is any of these things, but makes a special effort to explain why he thinks it cannot be soul. Plato, he says, hesitates to call nature a soul because he considers its essence to lie between the *ousia* of soul and that of the bodily powers. That is, nature is both inferior to soul because it is "divided among bodies" (a reference to *Timaeus* 35a) and unable to rise above them, and superior to body because it contains the rational principles of all things, creates all things, and bestows life. So nature belongs properly to bodies and is inseparable from them, while soul—and he has in mind here specifically noeric soul—is separable and belongs both to itself and to another, i.e. the physical world. Nature's functions in the universe, however, make it more than just something corporeal. Irrational nature is prefigured in the Paradigm, where it has a noeric pre-existence. Through this source it becomes one of the demiurgic causes, albeit the last of them, that generate the "corporeal nature" (*to sômatoeides*)[13] and it is the limit of the incorporeal essences, being filled with rational principles and powers through which it "guides" (*kateuthunei*) what is within the cosmos; it is in a sense a god who directs the entire cosmos by his powers; like soul it comes forth from the Demiurge, "inspiring" all things, i.e. it "breathes in" the trace-forms or their *emphaseis*, although unlike soul there is no "part" of it that remains with the Demiurge. Most significantly, it is in a sense, like soul, self-moving in that its activity derives solely from itself.[14]

There is corroboration for this conception of nature elsewhere, where we find further that the level of nature to which he is referring here is the incorporeal *phusis* of the cosmos that existed (hypothetically) before the generation of the physical world and that manifests itself in all living beings as both their formal and motive causes, combinative force, and nurturing power.[15] It moves all things in time and unites what are separated by time and place. It even links all mortal reality to what is divine and establishes a relationship of *sympatheia* between the two realms. In individual bodies, this same nature, now in its microcos-

[13] Cf. *In Tim.* I 261,26 [4.7] and 263,4–6: Nature, like the Intellect of the All and soul, is productive.

[14] That nature is both formal and motive cause is confirmed at *In Parm.* III, 794, 164 [4.14]. At *In Tim.* III 119,24f. Proclus defines it in the typically Aristotelian manner as the principle of motion and change.

[15] *De prov.* 11–12 [4.20–21]. As such *phusis* is equivalent to the Fate of all beings.

mic manifestation, is the power that binds together all bodily parts and is thereby the very Fate that governs bodies.[16] Although itself devoid of reason, nature possesses the rational principles of entities in actuality (rather than simply potentially), and with them the capacity to create all things. This is possible, however, only if there is some more ultimate reality that contains the forms, i.e. the Paradigm, from which nature receives its *logoi*. Nature insinuates itself entirely into bodies, "…breathing her movement and her reason-principles into them from inside."[17] A cause of this sort is necessary for bodies, Proclus says, for without an inseparable principle of movement and growth, there would be no stability to their existence. Nature, therefore, unlike the soul but much like matter, has no *telos* appropriate to itself, but exists totally for the sake of the bodies to which it is permanently bound. Proclus finds the separation of the irrational nature from the soul in other texts from the dialogues as well. Moreover, in his exegesis of *Timaeus* 35a he adopts the orthodox Platonic position that the undivided Essence of soul is Intellect, while the divided Essence, he thinks, is more vaguely referred to as the corporeal life (*hê sômatoeidos zoê*) which is inseparable from bodies.[18] The "corporeal life" is clearly the same as the corporeal nature described above. Soul, in that its own nature is intermediate between these two extremes, participates in Intellect as its image, while serving as the paradigm for the nature of bodies, which issues directly from it, through the agency of nature.[19] But he goes beyond this standard Platonist view by asserting that soul cannot be a mixture of these Essences themselves, among other reasons because, on the one hand, as extremes the undivided and divided Essences are opposites, and there can be no mixture of opposites, and, on the other, as an intermediate creation, soul's nature cannot in any way contain "portions" of either of the extreme Essences between which it is ontologically ranked.[20] Therefore soul must be mixed of entirely different natures that are "analogous" to these extremes.[21] Only thus could the Essences be said to "survive"

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[16] Cf. *In Parm.* VI, 1045,26ff. [4.15].

[17] *In Parm.* III, 794,164 [4.14].

[18] *In Tim.* II 142,29ff. and 148,25. At.*Th. Ph* I, 9, p. 37,11ff. the former is further identified with the Limited and the latter with the Unlimited of *Philebus*.

[19] *In Tim.* II 150,27f. Soul is referred to as the *hupodokhê* of Intellect at *In Tim.* I, 402,24; see also 405,7ff. Cf. Trouillard (1970), 246 and 250, and (1975), 132ff.

[20] This and other arguments come at *In Tim.* II 149,4ff. and 152,24ff. Cf. Trouillard, (1975), 133f.

[21] On the Proclan idea that the soul is a kind of analogy, see Trouillard (1977), 313.

the mixture, or could soul be said to be connected to both Essences while being neither of them. So the hierarchical status of soul's nature in Proclus' exegesis can be represented as follows:

One

Intellect
(undivided Essence)

Nature of Soul
(mixture of nature analogous to Intellect [undivided Essence]
and nature analogous to Essence that is divided among bodies)

Essence Divided Among Bodies
(corporeal life = corporeal nature)

Corporeal Essence

This hierarchy[22] is consonant with a number of Proclan philosophical tenets, one of the most important of which is that it effectively separates soul's nature from anything belonging to the corporeal nature.[23] In a critique of those before him—both explicitly of Eratosthenes and Severus,[24] who he thinks had at least suggested that soul's nature contains a bodily element, and also at least indirectly of Plutarch and others who took the more literal view of *Timaeus* 35a that part of soul's nature becomes divided through its contact with matter—Proclus counters that the essence of soul does become divided, but not among bodies, as most other Platonists had asserted. It is, rather, divided through itself; soul needs nothing of corporeal nature to be what it is.[25] To be divided while remaining also a unity is a characteristic exclusive to an intermediate being.[26] In effect, what Proclus does is to redefine Plato's sense of the intermediacy of soul. Rather than understanding Plato to mean that soul is intermediate to the extent that it is blended of both an incorporeal nature and a nature that is bound up with matter, as most of his predecessors had done, he argues that to be intermediate in the strict sense of the term, soul must exist on a level that is

[22] Proclus' aversion to a dualistic account of creation is further revealed in this hierarchy in that each of these Essences below the One is a form (*eidon*) of the Demiurge, who is therefore to be considered their *genos*. Thus they follow from a single, continuous line of generation. Cf. *In Tim.* II 150,25 – 151,30. See also Trouillard (1975), 131.

[23] Cf. *In Tim.* II 140,15ff.

[24] Severus: *In Tim.* II 152,27ff. and 153,19ff.; Eratosthenes: *In Tim.* II 152,24ff.

[25] *…kath' autên meristê gignomenê kai mêden deomenê sômatôn eis to einai ho esti*.: *In Tim.* II 150,23–24.

[26] Cf. *In Tim.* II 152,1ff. and 164,3ff.

between both natures, thus having a certain relationship to each, but being composed of neither.[27] For example, to Plutarch's interpretation that the essence of soul becomes divided when it comes into contact with matter,[28] Proclus responds that if it were possible for soul's essence to have such a relationship with the physical world, then soul would not, strictly speaking, be incorporeal. Hence the creation of the cosmos cannot involve the mixture of any part of the rational soul with matter. So Proclus demonstrates that, despite Plutarch's contention to the contrary, he does not succeed in fully separating the nature of soul from all that is bodily.

A careful reading of these passages indicates some confusion in Proclus' interpretation, most likely the result of his understanding of the cosmogonic myth in *Statesman*. In his treatise on evil, as we have already noted, Proclus seems to conceive of the nature of the living being as bifurcated, one *phusis* evil and the other good, the former originating in the pre-cosmic disorderly motion and the latter the product of demiurgic creation. This was hardly an unusual way of reading Plato. Porphyry had adopted essentially the same dualistic interpretation, distinguishing in individuals between the nature that is proper to their bodies and the nature that is bestowed upon them by god.[29] It is a reading that was justified by the description of the pre-and post-creation phases in the *Statesman* myth. The interpretation probably originates in the common view of the irrational soul with its various powers as the seat of the corrupting passions as well as of nourishment and growth. But it is a reading that Proclus cannot press too hard, since it could be regarded as confirmation that the irrational nature, from which originates corporeal evil in the world, is independent of providential control. So, although the irrational nature is not "from God" (*theothen*),[30] Proclus in other texts conflates it with the alimentary nature that does have a divine origin. Under this interpretation, the nature of the living being is unitary, being Plato's irrational "ancient state" that has

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[27] Cf. *In Tim.* II 155,3 – 156,24. In every case, Proclus cautions, it is necessary to assign to the nature of a thing only what is appropriate to its rank.

[28] This fact may explain why Proclus refers to Plutarch's divided Essence as *phusikê*.

[29] *auta kath' hauta apo tês idias ekhei ta sômata phuseôs kai autês dêlonoti tês phuseôs autôn theothen paraskhetheisês*: *ap.* John Philoponus, *De aet. mundi.* 14.3, p. 547,24 – 548,1. It is unclear to me at least whether Philoponus is at this point in his summary of Porphyry's exegesis paraphrasing Porphyry or presenting his own opinion.

[30] Later on, in Christian Neoplatonism, nature is, as it must be, the creation of God; see I. Hadot (1978), 77f. on Hierocles.

been transformed into a rational and beneficent *phusis*; yet it still retains properties of its original state that can bring it into conflict with the Good.

The metaphysical foundation for the more favorable powers of nature is provided in 5.12, where Proclus purports that nature pre-exists "intellectively" in the Paradigm and that it is through this "suspension" in the Paradigm that nature directs the formation of bodies. We are reminded here of Proclus' similar description of the pre-existence of the inarticulate forms in the Paradigm, and may well wonder if he is not confusing the functions of nature with those of the traces of the forms in *Timaeus*. During the process of creation, as nature moves from this sphere toward the Demiurge, all souls look to it so that they might understand their own guiding role in generation, thereby harmonizing themselves with Fate. It follows from this special association of the Paradigm with the disorderly motion that the *phusis* as well will be the product of paradigmatic activity. So here the cause of nature is not the Demiurge (*In Tim.* III 270,24); rather nature is first prefigured in the Paradigm. By virtue of this connection Proclus reconciles the seemingly contradictory functions of nature, i.e. as both the source of corporeal evil and one of the fundamental instruments of the Demiurge's providential activity. For, although the motion that it engenders during the pre-cosmic generation is irrational and therefore evil, because of its derivation from the Paradigm nature appropriately gains the ability after cosmic creation to move the corporeal world according to the directives of Providence. In this way the Paradigm becomes a necessary object of contemplation for all souls. Just as the Demiurge directs the universe by looking to the Paradigm of nature, so by regarding the same Paradigm souls come to understand the entire order of the world and their role in it. Again, Proclus' focus in discussing the causal connection between the Paradigm and nature is wholly on highlighting the Paradigm's positive influence on nature as it manifests itself in nature's alimentary care of the cosmos after creation, and not on explaining the problematic relationship between the Paradigm and the proto-body's irrational activity before creation.

2. Influences

On one level such a theory of the irrational nature served the interests of those Platonists who saw the need to reconcile the Platonic conception of soul as separable and immortal with the Aristotelian concep-

tion of soul as the inseparable *entelekheia* of body. Henry Blumenthal has called attention to two ways of doing this in the Platonic tradition, one of which was to stipulate that soul properly speaking first approaches matter that is already informed. That is to say, soul cannot come into contact with primary matter, but rather finds matter combined with partial or inarticulate forms through the agency of the irrational nature, which is construed either as the lowest level of soul that is inseparable from body or, as in the case of Proclus, as an inseparable, sub-psychic entity that acts both as formal and motive causes to the body. In this way Platonists could preserve the separability of the soul properly so-called and at the same time cede to Aristotle the principle that "…the soul informs body, allowing some lower kind of soul to be present in the body and to give it its formal element."[31] Soul's causal activity must therefore be different from that of *phusis*, whether that term stands for the vegetative soul or for some formal and motive cause that is inferior to soul altogether. This principle, that the body with which the separable soul comes into contact must already possess some sort of soul, can be traced as far back as Middle Platonism.[32] With regard to the question of whether or not all of the soul enters body in its descent, Iamblichus attributes to Atticus a view in the affirmative, with the qualification that the descent of the rational soul into body is preceded by that of the "irrational, discordant, and enhulic soul;" only when this irrational soul is brought to order (*katakosmoumenê*) can there be union of the rational soul with body.[33] Similarly, Galen reports that some philosophers, in opposition to Aristotle and the Stoics, hold that, while the essence of soul is immaterial, the "first part" of it is a bodily vehicle (*okhêma*) which serves as an intermediary (*mesou*) through which the rest of the soul comes into contact with other bodies.[34] As we shall see, among Neoplatonists both Plotinus and Proclus articulate this principle, as does Iamblichus, who adds the characteristically Platonic

[31] H.J. Blumenthal, (1971), 60 and (1996), 93. He sees *phusis* as exclusively a formal cause to bodies, apparently unaware of the practice of linking it to Plato's disorderly motion.

[32] The importance of this principle arises from a problem inherent in a doctrine that requires that an immaterial and immortal soul descend into a material body. How is it possible that a divine soul comes into contact with matter?

[33] *De anima ap*. Stobaeus I 379,25 – 380,5.

[34] *De placitis Hipp. et Plat.*, p. 643f. Müller and see Dodds (1963), 316f. The concept of the irrational soul or nature as the intermediary or mean term between the rational soul and the body is found in Proclus as well.

rationale that since nature does nothing in vain, even the activity of the irrational soul must have a good purpose.[35]

3. Proclus' Application

For the sake of illustration, let us here consider Proclus' application of the principle. In this matter the salient texts for him as for others come from *Timaeus*, particularly 69b–d.[36] The reasons why the Demiurge ordained the creation of the mortal race (the cosmos would not be complete without them) and why he delegated the task of fashioning it to his divine offspring (in order that we be mortal rather than immortal and that the Demiurge might himself be blameless for the wickedness that we would perpetrate on this earth)[37] all played important roles in the Platonic tradition of exegesis of the dialogues. In this way our falling short of perfection is much more easily explained: the divine world is not responsible for it and, anyway, it is a necessary part of the best of all possible worlds. The gross components of our makeup as humans are also significant elements of this philosophical rationalization. Timaeus emphasizes that the younger gods produced the physical body as a "vehicle" for the soul (44e and 69c) and as a "slave" to its dominant part, the head. As for the soul, its immortal and mortal parts are in fact two different *kinds* of soul that are fashioned separately by separate artisans, the immortal kind by the Demiurge and the mortal kind, the seat of the passions, by his offspring. Now, whereas Plato expressly gave to the body alone a purely instrumental value in his account,[38] many of his interpreters went further by treating the irrational soul in much the same way. The irrational soul is useful for performing functions that not only directly benefit the higher soul, but also allow for certain other aspects of cosmic existence that would not be possible with the existence of the rational soul alone. As for the first of these functions of the irrational soul, Proclus states the case of his fellow Platonists most succinctly: in accordance with Providence, the mortal soul exists for the sake of the immortal soul, specifically to provide the proper conditions for the descent of the immortal soul, which is regarded as necessary

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[35] *Protrep.* 34,5 ff. It may be added that this principle also appears in the Hermetic tradition; cf. *Corp. Herm.* X 17, 121,12 ff. and Hermes *ap.* Stobaeus I 290,13 ff.

[36] Cf. Elferink (1968), 37 f.

[37] *In Tim.* III 302,24 ff.; *In Remp.* I 101,1–13.

[38] In opposition to this, the Gnostics pointed to what Plato says about the body in, e.g., *Phaedo*, that it is an obstacle to the soul. Cf. Plotinus, II.9.17.1 ff.

(*De dec. dub.* 31,33–35, p. 53). The exact purpose that the mortal soul serves is to provide mediation for the immortal soul in its descent.[39] It is necessary that before the descent of the immortal soul the mortal soul descend immediately into bodies, so that the immortal soul, in its descent, might not have to "inhabit flesh, bones, and, in general, the earthly organs."[40] For how, Proclus asks, could a body that is lifeless and compound participate in a soul that is incorporeal and immortal (*De dec. dub.* 31,13–17, p. 50)? Here we recall one of the conclusions he draws from his exegesis of *Timaeus* 35a, that soul's essence cannot be formed directly from any physical nature, since otherwise it would cease to be incorporeal and separable. So there must be an assortment (*summixis*) of souls in the cosmos for its completion, that is, a rational soul so that mortal beings might have some portion of rational lives, and an irrational soul so that the rational soul might not infuse itself directly into a body, and so act and suffer in the same unstable manner that characterizes irrational beings (*In Remp.* I p. 38,17ff.). Thus the irrational soul in us is the same power that animates all living things (*In Tim.* III 135,8–23). In its lowest manifestation in humans its one task is to instill in the corporeal mass a purely irrational force of life and thus to prepare it for the rational soul's entry. In all living beings it is completely dominated and manipulated by the providential actions of the Demiurge. This mortal and inseparable life-force or nature, along with body, thus exists to serve the will of the creator, although the existence of both is at least conceptually outside of his creative activity and, according to Plato, he handed over responsibility for their generation to lesser gods so that he might be relieved of blame for anything they might do. Both then are indispensable for the proper functioning of the cosmic order, but, insofar as they are estranged from the essence of the soul seen in itself (i.e. the purely rational soul), both are external attachments that can be shed in soul's reversion.[41] And, of course, this irrational nature is instrumental in the generation of corporeal evil.

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[39] For the same reason soul is needed as an intermediary between the body, which lacks intelligence, and Intellect. That is, what is *anous* cannot coalesce directly with *nous* (*In Tim.* I 402,15ff.).

[40] Proclus similarly rejects the doctrine of Eratosthenes, according to which the soul is made up of both corporeal and incorporeal elements. For there cannot be a mixture of divided body with what is undivided (*In Tim.* II 152,25–30).

[41] Cf. Iamblichus, *Protrep.* 16, 3: soul sheds the "mortal *phusis*."

Evolution of the Principle

The principle that an irrational nature operates as an intermediate term between the higher soul and matter is the direct result of an exegetical tradition that established the need for a separate stage of cosmic creation falling between bare matter and the generation of fully formed bodies. We should begin with a brief look at the most obvious sources of this distinctively Platonic conception of nature. Ultimately it is a conflation of two notions drawn from Aristotle, that of nature defined as the principle of motion and rest[42] and that of the nutritive soul (*psukhê phutikê*), the soul proper to plants and animals whose proper functions of self-nutrition, reproduction, growth and decay, were considered by Aristotle to be forms of motion.[43] Yet the type of motion that this nature is supposed to engender is, as we shall see, thoroughly reinterpreted in a variety of ways by the Platonists. Certain commentators—and we can count Proclus among them—rejected Aristotle's claim that such motion constituted a form of life, for by denying that the nutritive soul is life (*zôê*), they could then argue that it is not strictly speaking a soul. Precisely why they would want to argue for this position is a question that we have already briefly taken up and will consider in more detail later.

It is the Stoics, however, who first combine these two Aristotelian ideas. Nature is for them the source of motion in inanimate entities that extends as far as plants.[44] At least some Stoics, however, jettisoned the Aristotelian idea that this principle of motion is a soul, since the motion to which it gives rise is in the form of nourishment rather than the self-directed movement associated with soul proper. Thus the origin of the idea found in Proclus *et alii*, that nature, understood as the Aristotelian nutritive 'life,' is not *stricto sensu* a soul, can also be traced to Stoic doctrine. In the Stoic hierarchy of causes there are distinctions (a) between, on the one hand, a cosmic nature that is rational, intelligible, immortal, divine, and the power responsible for bringing order to the

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[42] *Phys.* 192b, 200b12, and 252b5–9.

[43] *De anima* 414b20–415a14. On the various connotations of 'nature' in the corpus of Aristotle, including nature as motive cause and "demiurge" of body, see Pépin (1971), 240f. and 304f. Claghorn (1954), who sees Plato abandoning the Presocratic concept of nature as disorderly and chaotic, points out the similarities and differences between Plato's and Aristotle's notions of *phusis* (121ff.).

[44] SVF 2. 458f. There nature is described as *hexis*, the level of *pneuma* that is found in all things devoid of soul, that is in motion.

disorder of the universe, and, on the other, the individual natures of things that sustain them in their existence, although both levels of nature share the same essence in that both are manifestations of *pneuma* or spirit; and (b) between this lower nature and another manifestation of spirit, soul, based on the reasoning that nature, which belongs to plants, is a lower degree of spirit than soul to the extent that it lacks the powers of perception, imagination, and impulse that soul possesses. The Stoics thus separated *phusis* from the irrational as well as from the rational soul.[45] Yet all levels of *pneuma* above *hexis*, including nature, possess self-motion.[46] Pertinent to our investigation, then, is the Stoic view of the natures of individual bodies as principles of motion that (a) come to bodies externally, yet (b) are inseparable from bodies and fully penetrate them and (c) are quintessentially irrational insofar as they are deprived of perception, imagination, and impulse,[47] although they are nonethess related essentially to the rational nature of the cosmos. What I want to demonstrate in what follows is that a compelling case can be made for the claim that the Neoplatonists appropriated the Stoic concept of lower nature for their own purposes precisely because it provided a plausible account of a power other than soul that is self-moved and imbues bodies with life and sustenance, giving to even inanimate objects their own source of motion apart from some *psukhê*.[48]

But to what end did the Neoplatonists borrow this Stoic idea? Rather ironically, it was part of an effort to resolve a problem that arises in the Stoic doctrine of evil. By recognizing only two principles in the cosmos, God and matter, most Platonists argued, the Stoics could not avoid making God responsible for all that is shameful and corrupt.[49] Of course, whether or not to posit a third principle besides God and matter as the cause of evil, in order to avoid the mistake made by the Stoics, was an issue that divided Platonists themselves, and provided

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[45] Cf. Plutarch, *Quod deus sit immut.* 35; cf. Sextus Emp. *Adv. math.* 9.81–85.

[46] SVF 2. 446 = Galen, *De trem., palp., conv.* 6 Vol. VII p. 616 K.

[47] The idea that nature is below perception and imagination is carried through the tradition. Cf. e.g. Plotinus, IV.1.1.29 and II.9.13.31 and Proclus, *In Parm.* III, 792–794.

[48] Cf. SVF 2. 988.

[49] Such attempts turn up in the works of later Platonists. Numenius strongly criticized the Stoics for linking their God to the origin of evil (*ap.* Calcidius, *In Tim.* cc. 289–294, for which see below). For the same reason Plotinus in his treatise on matter (II.4.1) complains that the Stoics equate God with matter "in a certain state;" and Proclus takes Chrysippus to task for making his first God both soul and nature that is inseparable from bodies (*In Tim.* I 414,1 ff.).

their opponents with the opportunity to charge them with doctrinal contradiction. With the notable exception of Plotinus, Platonists generally agreed that neither matter nor God could be the source of evil; the truly divisive question was whether or not soul could be the cause. Proponents of both sides of this last dispute were faced with further difficult questions. For if one believes that soul causes evil to exist, then what sort of soul are we to imagine it? And if one thinks it impossible that soul can cause evil, which at the cosmic was regarded as a kind of chaotic change or motion, then what is the cause? We shall find that the concept of nature plays an important role in the solutions to all of these matters.

As will become clear in what follows, Platonists of all periods revised elements of the Stoic doctrine of nature in light of their exegeses of a number of key passages in the dialogues of Plato, so that the lower nature of the Stoics is identified with what Plato in *Timaeus* 69c refers to as the "mortal form" of soul that the gods who were offspring of the Demiurge implant in body as the seat of the passions and a "lure" for evil. The product of this medley of interpretations is the notion that all things have two lives or natures or sources of motion, one separable from the body and the other inseparable, one rational and the other irrational. That Plato calls the latter "another form of soul" different from the immortal principle is not lost on his later interpreters, some of whom concluded that the lower nature or nutritive soul is not really a part or faculty of the soul, but has more in common with the body. So, when one abstracts from bodies their higher, ordering principle, nature remains connected with the body considered in itself and is regarded as its cause. Others, however, came to the wholly different conclusion that this generative cause could not be any sort of irrational power, but must be the same divine soul that participates in the governance of the entire cosmos. And beginning with the Neoplatonists, we find the development of theories of nature that attempt to overcome the weaknesses of both of these earlier treatments.

1. First Interpretation

Plutarch

One of the most prominent proponents of the first of these positions is Plutarch, who among the Middle Platonists presents the fullest account of nature. In his treatise on the creation of the soul in *Timaeus*, he refers the pre-cosmic chaos as the essence of body (*sômatos ousia*) which he says

is what Plato means when he speaks of the *pandekhous phusis* or "all-receptive" nature that is the seat and nurse of becoming and necessary for the creation of all things.[50] It is evident from what Plutarch has to say that at this point in the history of Platonism the precise relationship of this corporeal nature with bodies themselves was already a matter of disagreement. He insists, as part of his polemic against a number of his predecessors, including certain Stoics,[51] that the corporeal nature is neither matter nor any sort of physical body, but must include soul. Yet it is perhaps an indication of the level of the debate at this point that he never specifically separates out the *phusis* as a distinct component of the pre-cosmic chaos, but for the most part simply conflates it with the general state of pre-cosmic disorder (*akosmia*). At times, however, he does come close to identifying *phusis* with the irrational soul in particular. Like all Platonists, Plutarch realized that Plato's account of creation could not be thought to be an event in which god aroused a dormant matter;[52] nor was it possible that he could generate body out of what was bodiless or soul out of what is without soul.[53] Creation must be the act of God imposing order on chaos, and chaos must possess its own source of eternal motion as well as a nature that is both psychic and somatic, while being neither a true soul nor a fully integrated body. The reason for this is clear. The divisible Essence that together with matter forms the pre-cosmic chaos becomes, in the generation of the individual soul, the lowest or *pathêtikon* element that grasps matter. This is the element that derives from the evil World Soul and is, in Plutarch's view, the one part of the soul that is native to it. For the primal soul is by nature evil, having no share in the intelligible world. Soul's participation in *nous*, or the rational element of soul, comes from a higher cause external to it. Clearly this lower element of soul is indistinguishable from what is variously referred to as the perceptive or nutritive or vegetative part of soul that elsewhere[54] Plutarch describes as deaf to reason, a mere offshoot of our flesh, and wholly attached to the body. The primitive soul—that is to say, the soul that takes no part in rational order—is, then, for Plutarch in important respects more closely

[50] 1014C, p. 149,1.

[51] 1016C–1017B, pp. 153,5 – 154,28. These would seem to be the same Stoics against whom, according to Calcidius, Zeno and Chrysippus argued their theory of nature. See below.

[52] 1015E, p. 151,23 f.

[53] 1014C, p. 148,18 f.

[54] *De virt. morali* 3, 442B.

related to the body than it is to soul proper. The importance of this concept for Plutarch's theory of evil is obvious from the long list of key Platonic ideas with which he identifies it: the corporeal nature is what in *Timaeus* 30a Plato refers to as the visible "reality," that is, the irrational and chaotic motion of which god brought under control; it is the Essence divided among bodies of *Timaeus* 35a which is mixed with the indivisible and unchanging essence to form a third essence intermediate between these two;[55] it is the "traces" of the forms that in 52d ff. bring the same disorderly motion described in 30a by "shaking" matter when they come into contact with it and by in turn being shaken by matter; it is the limitlessness (*apeiria*) of becoming described in *Philebus*; it is the "innate desire" of the "ancient nature" of the universe that in the *Statesman* myth, with the help of Fate, reversed the motion of the earth after the withdrawal of the helmsman of the cosmos and in *Phaedrus* 237d is equated with the irrational soul; it is the corporeal element; and, perhaps most importantly for Plutarch, it is the evil World Soul that Plato hypothesizes in *Laws* 896a ff.

There is a noteworthy feature of Plutarch's concept of nature that is consistently confirmed throughout the history of the Platonist tradition, including, as we have noted, by Proclus: despite the fact that it is the source of corporeal evil, *phusis* plays a necessary and salutary role in the creation of the world. This is particularly prominent in the treatise *De Iside et Osiride*, where nature, mythologized as Isis, is said to be the source of good as well as of evil (369D). She thus possesses two distinct parts or movements, one away from the Good toward non-existence and the other toward God. The first movement is nihilistic, the second, which is her natural inclination toward the Good (372E), is creative and preservative (375CD). When combined with matter, she produces the imperfect first creation that anticipates the generation of the rational world (373BC). So the coming-to-be of the precosmic chaos, although evil in its deprivation of order, is at the same time the fulfillment of Providence in pursuit of the Good. We are not told by Plutarch—nor, for that matter, are we expressly informed by anyone else in the tradition—how to reconcile what seem to be mutually exclusive traits. It can be said, however, that this bifurcation of nature fits better within

[55] Cf. Reydams-Schils (1999), 164, who claims that for many Middle Platonists divisible being, identified with the notion of the Other, is connected either with "…a lower soul principle inhering in matter and causing its disorderly motions…or with matter itself."

the monistic systems of the Neoplatonists, in which the principle of evil must fall under the dominion of the Good, than it does here. It is another instance of what appears to be a tendency on the part of Plutarch, despite his strongly dualistic concept of the evil World Soul, to bring his pre-cosmic disorder into conformity with the cosmic plan of the rational Demiurge.

Numenius

Like Plutarch, Numenius opposed the Stoic position that nature is material, adopting the same division of the composite being into two natures, one of which is proper to bodies and the other immaterial, that we have seen in Porphyry's and Proclus' exegeses.[56] His view that bodies are by nature corpses that (oddly enough) are constantly shifting and in need of incorporeal form in order to remain whole shows that he considered the first nature to be nothing other than unalloyed matter. The combinative and unifying nature of beings, he says, must be soul, but this incorporeal nature is decidedly not, as it was for Porphyry, or even in a qualified sense for Proclus, "from God." Rather, it is, in fact, a principle that comes to be through chance or Fate rather than through Providence[57] and is inseparable from bodies. From Calcidius we find that Numenius identified it both with Aristotle's nutritive soul (*anima stirpea* = *psukhê phutikê*) and with the divided essence (*dividua substantia*) of *Timaeus* 35a.[58] As the latter it is that part of the rational World Soul that is in itself irrational and the principle of cosmic and human evil, that is the soul of matter. As the former it is the cause of the existence of bodies, provides both vital power and *spiritus* to the world, and—here again we find a point of contact with Proclus—gives to all intelligent beings the power to appreciate the providential work of the Demiurge. Once again, then, we have what appears to be a single *phusis* that in its pre-cosmic state is the cause of the chaotic motion of matter that opposes divine order and reason, but in its role as causal agent in the cosmogony becomes, through the transformative power of the Demiurge, a source of sustenance to the created world and the willing

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[56] *ap.* Eusebius, *Pr. ev.*15.17, 3–8; p. 819c–820a V.; II, p. 381,18 – 382,19 Mras = frg. 4a and Nemesius, *Peri phus. anth.*, 2, 8–14; p. 69–72 C.F. Matthaei; *P. G.*, 40, c. 537b–541a = frg. 4b.

[57] Cf. Calcidius, *In Tim.* cc. 296–298. This is maintained, as we have seen, in defense of the Pythagorean view that evil must co-exist with Providence.

[58] *In Tim.* cc. 29–31.

ally of Providence.[59] As a dualist, however, Numenius wants to claim at the same time that nature thus redeemed is nonetheless twofold rather than simple (*non…simplicem sed bimembrem*: *In Tim.* c. 28, p. 78,12–13), and that its parts, each having a separate cause, exist as at least quasi-independent entities.[60] Still, his view of the created world is in the end not much different from that of Proclus: evil can never be eradicated and exists as a separate but unequal contrary component of an essentially rational universe.[61]

By giving soul to matter originally Numenius could claim, against both Plutarch and the Stoics, that matter itself is substantial and thus qualifies as the principle of evil. And by agreeing with Plutarch that the source of evil is a pre-cosmic soul that is inexorably bound up with body, Numenius could maintain that *per se* it is a principle that is independent of the divine order that actively opposes the providential actions of God. Yet when the controlling force of that order is brought to bear on its chaotic motion it willingly complies with Providence, becoming a nurturing power that produces and sustains bodies.

2. The Opposing View

Atticus

We should not assume, however, that it was undisputed practice among Platonists of this period to identify nature either with the lowest phase of the irrational soul that is inseparable from bodies or with some source of chaotic motion that is similar to soul but inferior to it. A far different view of *phusis* is presented by those Platonists who voiced strong opposition to Peripatetic philosophy, most notably Atticus. According to Eusebius,[62] Atticus attacked Aristotle for his position that all things below the moon are governed by nature and that nature, although the cause of motion, is not soul.[63] This, he argues, directly

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[59] Calcidius' assertion (*In Tim.* c. 299) that the Demiurge did not add to the nature of matter, but preserved it in order that it not be destroyed during creation, so that it simply changes from disorder to order, is Numenian. See also c. 295.

[60] Which fits with what Porphyry tells us about Numenius' dualistic psychology, that the rational and irrational souls are not two parts of a single soul, but separate souls.

[61] We might compare Numenius' view with that of Moderatus, who held that nature is inferior to soul and belongs to the material world. Cf. Dillon (1997), 29.

[62] Eusebius *Pr. ev.* 15, 12,1–4 = frg. 8, p. 66,1–8.

[63] Although appearing nowhere in the surviving works of Aristotle, this idea was widely attributed to him in the second century. On the various responses to this 'Aristotelian' view, see Sharples (1994), 179–181.

contradicts Plato, who not only held that nature was soul exclusively, but also that it was not an irrational soul. He taught that there must be one rational psychic (*empsukhos*) power that controls all things in the world, so that all events, including those in the celestial and sublunar sphere, happen "according to Providence."[64] He must, then, have rejected the doctrine of Numenius and his followers, who divided nature into a pre-cosmic phase that militates against Providence and a post-creation phase when it comes under the control of the divine order. Atticus' interpretation of Plato is thus a repudiation not only of Aristotle's thought, but also in effect of certain aspects of the Stoic concept of nature[65] and of the concept of certain Platonists such as Numenius that evil activities are the product of Fate, which exists alongside Providence as an independent co-cause of events in the world.[66] And his acceptance of Plutarch's exegesis of Plato was only partial: like Plutarch, he made the cause of the pre-cosmic chaos a primal soul; unlike Plutarch, however, he did not identify this primal soul with a pre-cosmic nature.

Atticus bases his argument on two passages from Plato's *Phaedrus* that are at the center of the debate regarding nature, that soul is "first principle and source of movement" (*pêgê kai arkhê kinêseôs*: 245d1) and that "all the soul is concerned with all that is without soul" (*pasa hê psukhê pantos epimeleitai tou apsukhou*: 246b7 f.).[67] As with all of Plato's texts, he gives these passages a literal interpretation: there can be no source of motion that is other than soul and the activities of the rational soul extend as far as inanimate entities. As for the last point he apparently saw no need, as did the Neoplatonists later, to posit nature as a buffer

[64] ll. 17ff. On this aspect of Atticus' philosophy see Moraux (1984), 569ff. and Moreschini (1987), 483ff.

[65] According to Plutarch (SVF 2. 937) the Stoics connected "common nature" with Fate rather than with Providence. That this was the Peripatetic view is attested by Alexander Aphrodisias, *De fato*, 169,18–20 Bruns. See Dillon (1997), 24 and 27. On the Stoic concept of nature, cf. Wallis (1987), 936ff.

[66] It is clear from what Proclus tells us that the precise relationship between Fate and nature was a matter of some debate in the schools. He notes with disapproval that some followers of Aristotle, including Alexander Aphrodisias, had identified Fate with the "partial nature" (*tên merikên phusin*), while Porphyry had claimed that Fate is nature *simpliciter* (*In Tim.* III 272,5–21). While Proclus on occasion appears to make the same simple identification of Fate with nature that Porphyry had, in this passage he qualifies the relationship in order to draw our attention to the much more important connection between Fate and Providence. On this see below.

[67] 245c10: *ap.* Eusebius, *Pr. ev.* XV, 12, 4, p. 814 Viger = frg. 8, p. 67 and cf. p. 810c = frg. 7, p. 64; 246b7–8: 9, 4, p. 809b =frg. 7, p. 62.

between the higher soul and bodies, believing it to be Plato's view that the whole soul, rational and irrational, comes into direct contact with the bodies to which it gives life.

By contrast, in limiting divine control of things to levels of beings that are above the moon, Aristotle removes divine governance from the rest of the world and thereby leaves no room for Providence in the cosmos.[68] The Platonic god, like his Stoic counterpart, must be active in all of reality. Perhaps as a means of further denigrating Peripatetic doctrine, Atticus compares it to Epicurean materialism and finds no essential distinction between them. He does acknowledge that the Epicureans expunged the gods entirely from the cosmos, while Aristotle had more conservatively given God control of at least part of it; but by eliminating him from terrestrial matters, Aristotle was as far from the true picture of the power of Providence as were the materialists.[69]

But how is this theory of nature to be reconciled with his doctrine of an irrational, evil World Soul that is the motive cause of pre-cosmic generation? First and foremost, we must see it as evidence of his disagreement with other Platonists, including Plutarch, who saw nature as the semi-autonomous remnant of the pre-cosmic chaos that can still in a relative sense oppose Providence while remaining essentially under its control. Plutarch's dualistic cosmogony was inspired by his opposition to the theories of earlier schools, particularly Stoicism. He could not accept the Stoic postulate that there is "…one rational principle, one Providence (*pronoia*), the Demiurge of matter that lacks quality, circumscribing all things."[70] But Atticus did indeed embrace this Stoic postulate as essential to guaranteeing the complete permeation of divine reason throughout the universe. If, then, according to Atticus nature is rational soul and the power of Providence extends throughout the physical world, then there would seem to be nothing left of pre-cosmic evil in creation that could in any real way resist divine control. It is diffi-

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[68] *ap.* Eusebius, *Pr. ev.* XV, 5, 8, p. 799d–800a Viger = frg. 3, p. 48, 54–71. There is some inconsistency in Atticus' description of Aristotle's position as reported by Eusebius. Here it is Aristotle's contention that divine control covers all levels of beings down to the moon; but at 12, p. 814b = frg. 8, p. 66, 12–14 we are told that the cause of celestial activities is, according to Aristotle, Fate. Similarly, in this latter passage the actions of humans are said to be governed by "prudence, Providence, and soul," while earlier (12, p. 800bc = frg. 3, p. 49, 81–85) it was nature rather than the reasoning of God that is supposed to determine human affairs.

[69] *ap.* Eusebius, *Pr. ev.* XV, 5, 9, p. 800a Viger = frg. 3, p. 48, 66–71.

[70] *De Is. et Os.* 369A. He also here opposes the atomist doctrine that places the first principles in "lifeless bodies."

cult to imagine what of Plato's "ancient nature" and "connate desire" would be preserved in the generated world. The transformation of disorderly motion to orderly activity must be seen as unequivocally complete, such that whatever it is that the primal soul becomes is entirely obedient to God. The Numenian notion of a nature that is *bimembris*, the source of evil in the world as well as its power of growth and sustenance, so characteristic of Platonic exegesis of Plato, would appear to conflict directly with Atticus' interpretation. He may well have reasoned that, since God's dominion is thorough, there can be nothing left of the chaotic activity of the primal soul to challenge it. This is apparently what Iamblichus has in mind when he ascribes to Atticus and Plutarch the view that the ordering powers of the rational soul bring into harmony the "discordant and disorderly movements" of the irrational soul.[71] Whatever influence Numenius may have had on Atticus, it did not include his idea, adopted in more moderate forms by many other Platonists, that the opposition of the primal soul to Providence endures to some degree in the created world. His reason for doing so is straightforward: if Providence is removed from any part of the cosmos, then it may as well be removed from all of it.

We must therefore conclude that, for Atticus at least, both elements of the pre-cosmic *akosmia* are fundamentally altered during the process of creation. Just as matter is transformed when combined with full forms, so the evil World Soul is essentially changed by its participation in Intellect.[72] Perhaps this is what Proclus has in mind when he says that, according to Plutarch and Atticus, the primal soul is "as it were, the substrate" (*hôs hupokeimenês*) of Intellect.[73] It is Atticus' view, then, that primal soul is to Intellect as matter is to form.

However, it would remain incumbent upon Atticus, as upon any other Platonist, to accept as axiomatic that pre-cosmic evil cannot be destroyed in creation. After all, this is what Plato stated explicitly in *Theaetetus* 176a and mythically in the *Statesman* myth. But if nature is

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[71] *De anima ap.* Stobaeus I 374,21 ff. At least with respect to Atticus, these disorderly motions are apparently a reference to the pre-existing "enhylic" or inseparable soul that is "irrational and discordant" and, according to him, is subsequently brought to order by the rational soul; cf. *ibid.* 379,25 ff. Iamblichus thus draws a basic distinction between Numenius and others who maintain a fundamental and continuing opposition between the rational and irrational souls, and Plutarch and Atticus who claim that their initial opposition is replaced by harmony. On these passages see Opsomer (2001[2]), 194.

[72] Cf. Proclus *In Tim.* I 382,8–11 = frg. 23, p. 75.

[73] *In Tim.* II 153,25 – 154,1 = frg. 35, p. 79.

rational soul, then what is the seat of evil that survives in the cosmos? And how is he to account for the irrational soul in living beings, if not as the remnant of the pre-cosmic soul? There is nothing in the surviving fragments and testimonia that gives us any insight into how Atticus dealt with these questions. If this evidence gives us an accurate picture of Atticus' theory of creation, then clearly his overriding concern—perhaps at the expense of absolute consistency with accepted exegesis of the dialogues—was to counter what he must have considered to be the excessively dualistic philosophy of Numenius with a doctrine that in certain important respects resembles the monistic cosmology of some Stoics.

This resemblance is surprising when we consider that it was largely in reaction against Stoic theology that Plutarch, and we may presume Atticus as well, advanced their famous idea of a third principle of creation. Yet Atticus may very well have felt sympathy with the concerns of some well-known Stoics to establish a firm foundation for the universal reach of divine Providence. Most Stoics had maintained that, while there is a large gulf separating the lower, irrational nature belonging to individuals from the higher Nature of the universe, they are essentially the same. Thus the same creative and sustaining energy that guides the rational universe is also present in the lowest order of reality. This theory apparently met with some opposition within the school. Calcidius[74] relates that Zeno and Chrysippus, among other Stoics, in reaction to accepted Stoic practice of simply conflating Aristotelian matter with the concept of the "essence" of a thing, had made a distinction between matter in the Aristotelian sense of substratum that lacks all qualification and form, and matter in its "primary" sense of essence, or foundation and cause of all things.[75] When we speak of matter in the sense of essence, Zeno said, we must attribute to it a kind of spirit (*spiritus*) and

[74] *In Tim.* cc. 290–294.

[75] This distinction, at least as Calcidius describes it, would seem to be more than merely conceptual, as is the case with another group of Stoics mentioned in c. 291. It is similar to, but nonetheless represents something more than the purely hypothetical differentiation between primary matter and matter as the substratum to the forms. For the Stoics, primary matter possesses a rational creative power and acts as a cause, while also exhibiting the characteristics of a purely passive principle (cf. Calcidius' description of primary matter in c. 292). Galen (*Peri plethous* Vol. VII p. 525 K. = SVF 2. 439) notes that the Stoics recognized two essences, one a "pneumatic" essence that is the cohesive force in things, and the other a "material" essence that is held together by this force. In its possession of both active and passive elements, matter thus mirrors both individual humans and the cosmos. Cf. the comment by Alexander Aphrodisias (*De mixt.* p. 226,

power, partly as a means of explaining the violent changes that the universe undergoes, but also, and more basically, to demonstrate that there is a single, common substance to all things and that this substance, in addition to (and perhaps to the same degree as) the multiple forms, helps to determine the nature of entities.[76] The *spiritus* is thus the one motive cause for the cosmos, bestowing life on the physical world and giving it beauty as the all-pervasive power that reaches to the lowest level of being. But, Calcidius interjects, these Stoics denied that the *spiritus* is (irrational) nature, insisting rather that it is a rational soul. Thus the world is God.

We should not overlook the significance of this claim, for it appears to contradict what is portrayed by other sources as the standard Stoic doctrine that a sub-psychic, irrational nature is the principle of life for beings that do not possess souls. This doctrine is indebted to Aristotle's concept of the vegetative soul, but takes his concept one step further in maintaining that, if we are to agree with Aristotle that nature is inferior to the sensate soul in that it lacks the powers of perception, impulse, and imagination, then we must acknowledge that it is not really a soul at all. This modification of Peripatetic psychology was a source of contention between some Stoics and the followers of Aristotle.[77] But the same Aristotelians disputed with certain Platonists—and very possibly with the Stoics as well—concerning the limits of the powers of Providence in the world. The issue both for Atticus and his followers in their claim that nature is a rational soul and for Zeno and his followers in their insistence that the *pneuma* of primary matter is a rational soul rather than the irrational nature is the problem of the relative spheres of power of Providence and Fate. Atticus wants to argue that divine Providence reaches into the sub-lunar world through the activity of the rational soul that is nature. Similarly, we find from another source that Zeno defined Fate both as the rational principle that moves matter and as the combination of Providence and nature.[78] So the *pneuma* of

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10 Bruns = SVF 2. 1047) that for the Stoics God is the form of matter in the same way that soul is the form of body.

[76] Although, as Calcidius says, it is completely passive (c. 293). Thus the Stoics share with Platonists the tendency to give to matter both 'Aristotelian' and 'Platonic' properties.

[77] Cf. the demonstration of Alexander Aphrodisias, *De anima. libri mant.* P. 118, 12 Bruns = SVF 2. 711, that *to phutikon* is "a soul and a part and power of the soul," not, as others (*sc.* the Stoics) say, nature.

[78] Ps.-Plutarch, *De fato* 574ef = SVF 2. 912 and Aëtius, *Doxogr.* 322. In the latter pas-

primary matter that, according to Calcidius, is the rational soul that moves primary matter or essence in Zeno's doctrine was also identified by him with Fate. We must therefore qualify Calcidius' statement that Zeno denied that the motive cause of primary matter is nature; rather, he denied that it is nature *simpliciter*. What moves matter is Fate, which is nature combined with—or perhaps guided by—Providence, and is therefore both rational and a soul. Zeno's doctrine thus begins to look much like that of Atticus. Both were guided in their conceptions of Fate by their opposition both to the Peripatetics, in their assertion that all phases of the creation of living beings are governed either directly or indirectly by the will of God and never by the irrational natures of their bodies, and to dualistic theories of the type associated with Numenius, in their implicit denial that Fate is a cosmic principle independent of and opposing Providence.[79] According to the Stoic version of this argument, because God so completely permeates the cosmos that even primary matter is endowed with a rational soul, this rational soul, rather than irrational nature, is the basic life-giving force in the sub-lunar regions. Thus Atticus' view that there is a single providential force operating at all levels of the cosmos is basically Stoic doctrine, or at least one version of it.[80]

There would seem to have been intra-scholastic controversy as well, both within Stoicism and within Platonism, over the role of nature in the cosmogony. The doctrine of Zeno, Chrysippus, and others appears to have been a response to those Stoics who held that irrational nature has in and of itself a life-giving and life-nurturing capacity at the sub-psychic level. For their part, against those Platonists like Plutarch who maintained that natural bodies are formed differently from souls insofar as the former are fashioned by an irrational nature which gives them a quasi-life in the form of self-motion, Atticus and his followers presented

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sage Fate, as the motive cause of matter, is said to be synonymous with Providence or nature. The same close relationship between nature, Providence and Fate is confirmed by Plutarch, *De Stoic. repug.* 1050 ab, p. 41,19ff.: the common nature and the common *logos* of nature is Fate, Providence, and Zeus; the "nature of the wholes," according to which all things are governed, is Fate. Cf. Theiler (1966[3]), 57, n. 48 and Geudtner (1971), 10. See also the text cited from the manuscript Parisinus graecus 1918 by Whittaker (1979), 60, n. 15.

[79] The Stoic concept of Fate as derived from Providence and thus always operating in unison with it is adopted by later Platonists, including Proclus, as we shall see below.

[80] On this point I would take issue with Wallis (1987), who seems to accept as the generically Stoic view that nature is sub-rational.

a variation of the Stoic theory that such creative energy must derive from a rational soul.

The point that these Stoics intended to make by this claim would have been exactly that made by Atticus: the motive cause of the physical world cannot be some irrational power that is either inferior to soul or equivalent to the lowest level of the irrational soul. Unless the seminal reason pervades all reality down to and including matter, we cannot call the world truly divine. All things must be dependent upon God; there is thus no room for the irrational nature that was recognized by many Stoics. Atticus employs essentially[81] the same argument in reaction against what was essentially the same alternative view, that part of creation is in the certain respects outside of divine control. By making this divine soul the motive force in world, but at the same time giving to it the same functions that were typically ascribed to the irrational nature—bestowing on life on the sensible world and embellishing it—, they all attempt to prove that the reach of Providence is truly universal.

It is significant that the Neoplatonists essentially abandoned Atticus' conception of nature in favor of variants of the "un-Platonic" doctrine of the Peripatetics. Proclus himself did not accept the view of Alexander Aphrodisias and other Peripatetics that Fate is the equivalent of the "partial nature," claiming that the latter is far inferior to the former, but neither did he embrace the position of Porphyry that it is nature *tout court*—by which he seems to have meant nature in both its common senses, i.e. as both cosmic and irrational ("partial") *phusis*—, since Fate is responsible for much that is beyond natural law. We may speak of Fate as nature, he says, only in the sense that nature is its substrate (*to hupokeimenon*); and not much later he claims that only Plato realized that this means that nature is the essence (*ousia*) of Fate.[82] In any case, Proclus' complaint with the Peripatetics is just the inverse of that of Atticus. For whereas Atticus is concerned with the fact that by identifying Fate with nature we do not do justice to the latter concept, Proclus feels that we do not thereby give *Fate* its proper status. Fate is, according to Proclus, much more than just nature, although nature is essential to it. Against Atticus and his followers, therefore, Proclus

[81] The obvious difference between the two arguments is that, while these Stoics distinguished the seminal soul from nature taken in its usual sense, Atticus identified the one with the other, thus in effect redefining nature.

[82] *In Tim.* III 272,5 – 274,2 [cf. 4.13].

closely associates Fate with the irrational nature, which is the source of all corporeal motion,[83] and also, as we have already noted, adopts the orthodox Platonist view that, following the *Statesman* myth, we must acknowledge that something of the pre-cosmic chaos survives creation as the cause for the existence of evil. As we shall see, Plotinus, although in no way so exact in his analysis of nature, had generally followed suit earlier. This Neoplatonist repudiation of Atticus' theory is very likely part of a broader rejection by later Platonists of the virulent opposition of Atticus and others to the prevailing pressure in the schools to bring the philosophies of Plato and Aristotle into harmony in all areas. Porphyry devoted a treatise, now lost, to a defense of these efforts at harmonization, in which he may well have proffered a very different theory of nature that was an attempt to meld Aristotle's ideas with those of Plato.[84] Proclus would have doubtless been familiar with this theory and influenced by it. But at the same time we must not forget that he was very much in agreement with Atticus' fundamental project of providing a monistic account of creation. As we see from *In Parm.* 1045, 25ff. [4.15], we can best understand nature by ascending to its "flower," through which we see that it is a divine and unifying force that permeates the universe and binds together its various parts into an ordered whole. In this context the *alogos phusis* is but one of the many powers of this single, divine nature, all of which work differently in different areas of the cosmos, but all to the same end. The supreme paradox, of course, is that the same irrational nature helps to make possible the existence of evil.[85]

[83] We find basically the same connection both between nature and Fate and between Fate and Providence (Fate is not only dependent on Providence, but takes its being and essence from it) in Iamblichus' *De fato* (*ap.* Stobaeus, II 7,43, pp. 111,26 – 112,19ff.) as we have seen in Proclus. Iamblichus thus espoused the very compromise between a dualistic and a monistic account of creation that Plotinus and Proclus advocated: separating nature from Providence, but at the same time making both components of a single *seria* of divine powers that are ultimately in absolute harmony.

[84] Cf. Des Places' (1977) comments on this treatise and other opposition to Atticus (24f.).

[85] The Neoplatonist rejection of the interpretation of Atticus may have been inspired by more than just the problem it posed for one attempting to account for the necessity of the existence of evil. There is the broader issue, mentioned above, of his virulent opposition to the prevailing pressure in the schools to bring the philosophies of Plato and Aristotle into harmony in all areas.

3. A Compromise: The Neoplatonists

Plotinus

In certain respects, then, the Neoplatonists attempted to reconcile these opposing theories of nature. Before returning to Proclus, it will be helpful to see how his treatment of the concept is prefigured in that of Plotinus, who, as Proclus did later, clearly borrows elements from both the dualistic interpretations of Plutarch and Numenius and the more monistic analysis of Atticus. In keeping with the former, he sees nature as the equivalent of the divisible Essence of the World Soul that does not remain above but descends in order to generate the cosmos. We recall that he also associates it (a) with the disorderly motion of the *Timaeus* 30c, (b) with such 'pre-cosmic' features as the traces of the forms that combine with matter in the same dialogue to produce that disorderly motion, and (c) with the "ancient nature" of the *Statesman* myth and its connate desire to bring chaos to the universe. All of these references in the dialogues, Plotinus feels, pertain to activities of the irrational soul situated in the body. Nature generates that power of the irrational soul that is more closely associated with bodies than with the soul itself,[86] the seat of the various passions, and a source of evil in the world, although not the primary source as it is for Plutarch and Numenius.[87] Once brought under the dominion of reason, however, its power becomes alimentary.[88] On the other hand, following Atticus Plotinus insisted that, from one perspective at least, nature is a form of soul exclusively rather than some combination of soul and matter, or some power inferior to soul.[89] It both is and generates life. And despite being the lowest form of the irrational soul and producing the disorderly motion, it is not in its origin and nature absolutely divorced

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[86] Cf. II.3.17.7 and I.8.4.14f. In IV.9.3, he refers to the various elements of the irrational soul as "powers" (*dunameis*, 17). On Plotinus' concept of nature, cf. O'Meara (1996), 75ff.

[87] Cf. Iamblichus' mistaken claim (*De anima ap.* Stobaeus I 375,2ff.) that Plotinus and Porphyry for the most part attribute evil to the vegetative soul and the irrational life. See Festugière (1983), 211, n. 1. On Porphyry's concept of nature, cf. Baltes (1978), 151ff., who claims that he may have been influenced by the Chaldaean Oracles. See also Lewy (1956), 117f.

[88] Again Plotinus shows his willingness to follow accepted Platonic exegesis that nature must retain some of its 'power' to produce evil (if evil is to exist in the world) while at the same time serving as the agent of God in the establishment of order. On the opposing properties of *phusis* see I.8.4, II.3.17, II.2.7, and IV.9.3.

[89] Cf. III.8.2.22ff. and .4.14f.

from the intelligible world, but, as we shall see, derives from that world. Such an interpretation of Plato is, of course, to be expected from a philosopher who, like the Neoplatonists who followed him, consistently distanced himself from his dualist predecessors. As we have just seen, in its outline his interpretation shows clear traces of Middle Platonic doctrine. It is when we come to its specifics, however, that its originality and complexity stand out.

In the simplest terms, the soul of the All, in its role as generative force of the cosmos, emits images (*eidôla*) of itself or illuminations (*ellampseis*) that descend to bring life to, direct, and adorn the physical world. These images come into contact with matter while remaining tied to the universal soul. The last in order of these images Plotinus refers to as nature (*phusis*) or the nutritive soul (*psukhê phutikê* or *to phutikon*); as are all such images of the universal soul, nature is a reason-principle (*logos*), a type of contemplation (*noêsis*) and life (*zôê*). We found in the previous chapter that this irrational nature generates a trace of soul in matter, producing a body that is not fully formed and is identified variously with the nature of body, the qualified body, or the body-in-itself. This proto-body is not yet alive insofar as its trace-soul is non-generative. In our discussion of I.8.4 we saw that he employs the term *sômatôn phusis* to refer to a combination of matter and forms that are not true forms since they lack life and are in a disorderly motion, and thus both impede the soul in its own activity and contribute to the generation of a secondary evil. This nature is not complete body because its form is not complete form; only when "perfected" does it become full body.[90] We also noted that at II.3.16 (47–54) he describes it as the product of the first of soul's two descents; on the second descent soul proper comes to matter, not in order to create or arouse it, since in the first descent matter already has been disturbed by generative principles that preceded soul's descent, creating what is "worse;" rather, soul descends to make what is worse better, to bring order to the "ancient nature" of the universe, Plato's term from *Statesman* that Plotinus interprets in standard Platonic fashion as the origin of evil that has not yet been brought to order by God.[91] In his description of soul's descent at VI.4.15 Plotinus paints the same picture: a living being comes into existence when soul approaches a body that is itself not soulless, but already possesses some trace (*ikhnos*) of soul and is in a state of disturbance which soul

[90] Cf. III.4.1.14.
[91] I.8.7.1ff.

then brings under rein. And again, somewhat later (.16.11 f.), he refers to this "body" as the "nature of body."[92]

With the question that he poses at the beginning of IV.4.18, "…whether the body possesses anything in itself and, when soul is present, it is alive already (*êdê*) having something of its own, or what it possesses is nature…," so that nature is what is in association with body, Plotinus indicates that the same debate over the status of nature that we noted in Proclus' analysis was actively engaged within his own school.[93] The issue is essentially whether nature itself is to be identified with the sub-sensitive soul, that is, the trace-soul that combines directly with matter to generate the disorderly motion of the body-in-itself, or it is to be assigned a more elevated status that brings it within the sphere of the higher soul rather than within that of the body. Proclus, of course, remaining, as he sees it, faithful to the view of Plato, opts for the first alternative, and so regards nature as an irrational power that is inferior to soul although it possesses certain of its defining attributes. Like soul, then, it possesses self-motion; unlike soul, however, to the extent that the motion that it generates lacks all order, it does not bring life to the body-in-itself. As we know, Plotinus in this passage and others adopts the opposing position, making nature an immortal image or illumination of the universal soul that remains in unbroken contact with it, both giver and possessor of life, that cannot come into immediate contact with matter. Plotinus accounts for the functions that Proclus gives to nature by positing an additional psychic layer, the trace of soul that is produced by nature. As *idion ti* of the qualified body and as lifeless and sterile, this trace-soul is in several important respects more corporeal than psychic; nonetheless it is a rational principle and imparts both motion and shape to matter. Plotinus' trace of soul, then, is truly on the cusp that separates the soul from the body, and thereby partakes of both natures. And, in a familiarly Platonist interweaving of *Timaeus* 30a with 52dff., he asserts that the blending of the trace-soul or incomplete form with matter engenders a disorderly motion to which the rational soul, in its subsequent descent, brings order. As he makes clear in I.8.4, however, the disorderly motion of the body's nature is only a "secondary"

[92] See also I.1.7–8.

[93] Similarly, his insistence in III.8.1–2 that nature creates while remaining motionless may be addressed not only to the materialist Epicureans, but also to those exegetes who, as did Proclus later, attributed self-motion to nature. Nature does impart motion to matter, but only through the intermediary of its product, the trace-soul.

corporeal evil insofar as it is matter, the primary evil, that brings irrationality to the motion caused by the initial descent into body of the trace of soul.

Thus as the images or illuminations of soul descend further into this world their creative energy diminishes and they become increasingly less rational until, at the point when the last of these images produces the trace-soul that joins with matter, it is sterile and no longer a true form of soul.[94] So nature indirectly produces motion in matter—a motion that is irrational and directionless—while itself remaining at rest. At this point, *phusis* or *psukhê phutikê* is functionally distinguishable from the rational soul, so that, following the doctrines of Stoicism and Middle Platonism, Plotinus can speak of soul and nature as being in body separately. A good case in point is the discussion in IV.4.18–20, where he explains the separate roles of soul, nature, and the qualified body in the act of desiring something.[95] Moreover, Plotinus confirmed the view developed further in later Neoplatonism that only the rational soul was created by the Demiurge, the irrational soul, including *phusis*, being the responsibility of the lesser gods. Yet he conceived of nature as still essentially psychic in that even at its lowest level it preserves its ties to the World Soul, although it has become "another form of soul," a reference to *Timaeus* 69c. Hence his interpretation of Plato represents a middle ground between the dualistic exegeses of Plutarch and Numenius on the one hand and the more monistic account of Atticus. The *psukhê phutikê* is irrational and indirectly contributes to the disorderly movement of the nature of body which is its peculiar evil; nonetheless there is no rupture between it and the intelligible realm.

In order to gain a better understanding of the nature and degree of Plotinus' disagreement with the position of Atticus, it will be helpful to consider in some detail two additional passages from the *Enneads*.

> And the statement "All of soul has concern for what lacks soul" is particularly relevant to this [*sc.* the power of growth and sustenance in bodies, or nature]. But different souls [do this] in different ways. "It travels across the entire heaven in various forms at various times," whether in perceptive form or rational form or the nutritive form itself. (III.4.2.1–4)

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[94] III.9.3.10 ff. and III.4.1.ff.

[95] There Plotinus speaks of nature as body that wishes to be something more than body, having acquired many chaotic movements that send it in different directions. These movements come because nature (*phusis*) has instilled a trace (*ikhnos*) of soul in body. The allusions to *Timaeus* 52d ff. are unmistakable. Cf. also .18.4 f.

> But how is it necessarily the case that, if the good exists, then so must evil as well? Is this, then, true because there must be matter in the All? For this All exists by necessity from opposing principles; rather, it would not exist if there were no matter. For "the nature of the cosmos is a mixture of Intellect and Necessity," and whatever comes to it from God is good, while evils derive from the "ancient nature," by which [Plato] means the underlying matter not yet brought to order by some god. (I.8.7.1–8)

Of particular note is that the first passage adduces the same statement from *Phaedrus* that for Atticus was the key text for explaining how it is necessary that we regard nature as a rational soul. What Plato means is that the *entire* soul cares for all of reality down to inanimate bodies, so that even at the lowest level at which form combines with matter, the 'motive' cause is directly the rational soul itself. In the interpretation of Atticus, Plato's text is a statement not only of the unity of soul's powers, but also of the unifying effect of its productive activities: since even the most primitive entities are determined by a divine power of reason, all things are governed immediately and directly by Providence. It is tempting to see Plotinus' short analysis of the passage as a rebuttal of Atticus and his followers, for his purpose is clearly to offer a more complete account of Plato's meaning, as if he wants to caution that by relying exclusively on the first statement, "All of soul has concern for what lacks soul," as Atticus had somewhat simplistically done, we risk distorting Plato's teaching. While it is true in general that all of soul governs bodies, we must also take note of Plato's statement immediately following, through which he offers the clarification that different powers of soul care for different levels of the cosmos at different times and in different ways. So we must not think that Plato intends to assert that the rational soul need be directly involved in the initial informing of matter, but, rather, that this is done by a forming principle that, although representing the lowest degree of psychic power and irrational because of its great "distance" from the rational soul, nonetheless is the product of, and so remains closely associated with, another rational principle (i.e. nature) that emanates from that higher soul and remains connected to it.[96] In this way he can preserve the essential unity of soul while also giving to each of its levels its proper activities. The higher soul thus remains undescended, but we are not burdened with a second 'motive' cause that is independent of the rational soul and therefore outside the realm of Providence.

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[96] As Blumenthal (1971), 63, makes clear.

This interpretation, moreover, has the virtue of not closing off the possibility of explaining the origin of corporeal evil. Our second passage is clear affirmation of the orthodox Platonist doctrine that Plato affirms the necessity of the existence of evil in his *Statesman* myth. The creation of the universe requires opposing principles, Intellect and Necessity, or the irrational "ancient nature" that is disorder. And the evil of this pre-cosmic disorder carries over into the ordered cosmos and is the source of all evil that occurs in it. By contrast, in interpreting nature as he did, that is, as the rational soul active in the world, Atticus would seem to leave little room for granting the continued existence in some fashion of the evil of his primal World Soul. From the rather limited perspective of an ancient Platonist, it would be very difficult, without recourse to the myth of *Statesman* and its perceived connections with other seminal passages in Plato's *opera*, to locate the provenance of cosmic evil in Plato's thought at all. We might well wonder, then, how, short of a purely nominalist theory of evil, Atticus would explain both why and in what manner evil must exist in the world.

Before returning to Proclus, we should first consider a distinctive feature of Plotinus' concept of nature that further separates his treatment of it from that of later Neoplatonists. It has to do with Plotinus' response to a much-debated question among ancient philosophers: How much of the soul is immortal? The debate on this question should be seen as part of a larger discussion of what is to be the proper interpretation of the nature of Plato's "mortal form" of soul, i.e. the irrational soul, its relationship both with the rational soul and with body, and to a certain extent its role in the creation of the cosmos. For example, the apparent conflict between Plato's statement in *Timaeus* that the irrational soul is mortal and his assertion in *Phaedrus* that the entire soul is immortal led to the explanation that in *Phaedrus* Plato can only have been referring to the rational soul and that, therefore, only the rational soul is truly a soul.[97] Another of the more interesting points of discussion concerns the essence and status of *phusis* as that part of the irrational soul that is its last true power, the one most remote from the rational soul to which, as we know to have been the belief of the time, Plato gave a special if limited role in the generation of the world. Although there was virtual unanimity regarding what its function in

[97] On this see Dörrie (1957), 415ff. and (1965), 177; Dillon (1997), 19.

creation was, there was nothing close to consensus concerning its precise relationship either to the soul or to the body. It is worth noting again in this regard that, although drawing this idea in part from Stoicism, Platonists form their own conception of nature largely in opposition to the Stoic concept. Still, as we have noted, the Stoic view that nature is at a level below that of soul had its Platonic adherents, and there were discussions among the various schools concerning this and the related question whether or not nature, as the lowest manifestation of psychic power, is separable and so immortal.

To get a better idea how these discussions played out, let us consider a doxography of ancient views on this question presented by Damascius in his commentary on *Phaedo*.[98]

(1) …some extend immortality from the rational soul as far as the ensouled *hexis*, such as Numenius…
(2) …others as far as nature (*phusis*), such as Plotinus, somewhere…
(3) …others as far as the irrational soul, such as Xenocrates and Speusippus among the ancient philosophers, and Iamblichus and Plutarch among those more recent…
(4) …others as far as the rational soul only, such as Proclus and Porphyry…
(5) …others as far as the intellect only, for they destroy [i.e. attribute mortality to] opinion (*doxa*), such as many of the Peripatetics…
(6) …and others as far as the universal soul, for they destroy individual souls [by collapsing them] into the universal soul. [*In Phaed.* 124, 13]

Damascius' list of the various views, which is more or less inclusive in attributing immortality to the different parts, phases, or powers of the soul, roughly follows the Stoic hierarchy of manifestations of *pneuma* or spirit, beginning with intellect and followed by the rational soul, the irrational soul, nature (*phusis*), and *hexis* (basically the power that holds bodies together). Although Stoics generally regarded both *hexis* and *phusis* as powers that operate below the level of soul, it bears repeating that certain Platonists, Plotinus among them, later included one or both of these powers among the different attributes of the irrational soul. According to Damascius, Plotinus' position that the soul's immortality

[98] See the discussions of this doxography by H. Dörrie (1957), 420ff., Dillon (1971), 140f. and (1973), 376f., and Blumenthal, (1975), 130; (1983), 80ff. On the question of the mortality or immortality of the irrational soul, cf. I. Hadot (1978), 103ff.

reaches as far down the hierarchy as nature puts him at odds with such later Neoplatonists as Iamblichus and Plutarch, who recognized the irrational soul, which they regarded as superior to nature, as the lowest level to which immortality should be attributed, as well as Porphyry and Proclus, who extended it only as far as the rational soul.[99] But it is far from clear that this was actually Plotinus' stance. In fact, Plotinus argues for this view only in his treatise on the immortality of the soul (IV.7), where he leaves little doubt that it is necessary to grant immortality to all aspects of the soul. The status of nature in particular is taken up in one of the chapters preserved by Eusebius (8.5), where Plotinus rejects the application of the Aristotelian concept of *entelekheia* to any part of soul. The most likely candidate as an inseparable soul or *entelekheia*, he says, is the growth-principle (the *phutikon*). As the power of soul that is most intimately connected with matter, the *phutikon* might appear to be no more than an inseparable *entelekheia*; yet, he argues, even this aspect is separable from body. And although he does not expressly claim for it immortality, his assertion here of its complete separability would seem to suggest that he, indeed, considers it to be immortal.[100]

But this position appears to be contradicted elsewhere in the *Enneads*, where he does by implication acknowledge an inseparable aspect of soul.[101] If nature is indeed the last of the images projected from the universal Soul, then we are left to wonder if Plotinus is alluding to the inseparability of *phusis*. Yet, he clearly regards this inseparable aspect as still part of the higher soul, which would certainly preclude the possibility that it dies with the body. His early treatise on the immortality of the soul, where he is, as we would expect, concerned to state a strong case for soul's immortality, is the sole treatise where he asserts that there is no part of soul that is not separable from body; perhaps he subsequently changed his mind. In that case, Damascius' report regarding Plotinus would be inaccurate. The situation becomes no clearer when we consider what he has to say about Plato's descriptions of the experiences of souls in Hades. Proclus, who in his commentary on *Timaeus* presents a doxography of his own similar to that of Damascius, points to a group of philosophers who believed that both the irrational soul and its vehicle must be immortal if Plato's accounts of the punishments

[99] On the question of the mortality or immortality of nature, cf. Baltes (1975), 246f.
[100] On Plotinus' attitude toward Aristotle's *entelekheia*, see also I.1.4 and IV.1.1.
[101] I.1.11.8ff.; I.8.14.17ff.; II.3.16.1ff. and .9.44f.; VI.4.15–16.

of souls and of their choices of lives are to make any sense. For the punishments come as the result of souls' actions caused by their irrational passions and the wrong choices that souls make are due to equally irrational urges. Hence it can only be the irrational rather than the rational soul that enters the underworld upon the death of the body to receive punishment. Plotinus certainly subscribes to this theory to an extent. It is the image of soul that is punished in Hades, he explains, while the rational soul itself remains unaffected in the intelligible world.[102] But he never indicates which of the chain of images that are emitted from the World Soul and are powers of the irrational soul—sensation, imagination, or nature—he has in mind;[103] or perhaps he means that it is the entire irrational soul that enters Hades, which would bring him into agreement with Iamblichus and Proclus. And he is also reticent regarding the crucial question whether whatever it is that survives the death of the compound being is truly immortal or merely longer-lived than the body.[104] So Plotinus' position pertaining to the question of the immortality of nature seems uncertain.

There is, however, no real contradiction, for the answer lies in Plotinus' concept of the trace of soul, which, as we know, he expressly differentiated from the images of the universal soul that extend as far as nature, all of which are separable from the body. The last of the World Soul's images, and the one that Plotinus most likely regarded as the inseparable aspect of soul, is therefore not nature, but rather the product (*gennêma*) of nature, which, we recall, he described in III.8.2.28ff. as the rational principle that is "….already the last, dead (*nekros*), and no long capable of creating another" and in IV.4.18.1ff. as an attribute (*idion ti*) of the nature of body that is a "warming" of the body rather than an illumination from the higher soul. Nature, therefore, is not strictly speaking the last of soul's images (*eidôla*) although it is the last of its forms (*eidê*), for it produces a reason-principle (*logos*) that contributes some degree of form, resulting in a visible shape, to the substrate, or matter. Elsewhere, as we have seen, Plotinus confirms that it is lifeless (*azon*), and adds that it is absolute indefiniteness and completely lacking in intelligence and existence. More pertinent to our interests here, it is,

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[102] VI.4.16.40ff. and see I.1.12.

[103] On Plotinus' idea that the lower manifestations of soul are images (*eidôla*) of the World Soul, see P. Hadot (1968), 334ff.; on a similar notion in Macrobius, cf. Henry (1934), 187ff. We find virtually the same idea in Proclus; see, for example, *El. th.* Prop. 64; *De dec. dub.* 63, 29–34; *In Tim.* III 330,9ff.

[104] It is also only the image of soul that enters the beast: I.1.11 and III.2.8.

as well, not a form (*eidos*) of soul; rather it is the *idion ti* of the body conceived in and of itself that the body must possess before the rational soul and nature can enter it. Still, Plotinus considers this part of the body-in-itself as a soul of some sort, and he likens the body-in-itself that is in possession of soul to air that has been warmed rather than illuminated. The point of this simile is revealed when we look back to a passage that we considered in the previous chapter. At VI.4.15.1 ff. Plotinus again affirms that the body-in-itself is not soulless (*oude proteron en tôi apsukhôi*), but has a "trace" of soul. As we have seen, this is a patent reference to *Timaeus* 52d ff., where Plato describes how traces of the elements combine with matter to form a chaotically moving entity. Here Plotinus interprets these traces as not really parts (*merous*) of the soul, but as a kind of "warming or illumination" that comes to matter. At this point in the generation of the body, then, as matter is "warmed" by the presence of a trace of soul rather than illuminated by a full image of it, it is still as yet without a full measure of soul and is thus lifeless. In both of these passages, the likening of the combination of the trace of soul with matter to the process of warming may well be an allusion to the Stoic concept of *pneuma* as it operates at the sub-psychic level. If so, Plotinus reverts to the Stoic concept in order to claim that the "warming" principle produced by nature is truly a soul, although only the lowest trace of one, and so not a soul that brings life. It is thus plausible to conclude that it is inseparable from the body. As well, it is the direct source of the disorderly motion in the "nature of body."

Plotinus and Proclus on the "Nature of Body": Similarities and Differences

In the previous chapter we called attention to the close parallel between Plotinus' "traces" of soul (and the forms that are not true forms of I.8.4.2 f.) and Proclus' "inarticulate traces of the forms" that, together with matter, compose the corporeal nature (*to sômatoeides*), the protobody whose motion is disorderly. We recalled that for Proclus, too, it is nature that causes these inarticulate forms to be blended with matter. In the present chapter we observed as well that in his view both nature and, we may presume, its products, the inarticulate forms, are powers that are inferior to soul. In Plotinus' terminology, it is the lifeless "nature of bodies" that is generated when nature produces the "dead" reason-principles and causes them to be combined with matter. But we know that Plotinus considered nature to be a form or part of soul, although its product, the lifeless but still psychic *logos*, is not. The latter, then, is a reason-principle that is something less than a full part

of soul possessing life, but is still a rational principle. At I.8.4.13ff., after speaking of the "nature of bodies" as a secondary evil insofar as it does not possess "true" form, is lifeless, and possesses a motion that is disorderly, Plotinus refers to the soul that produces evil as that which is deprived of a share in form (*amoiros eidous*) since it is mixed with matter. Now, to speak of a soul that has no share in form may seem as paradoxical as to speak of a rational principle that is not a form of soul. In both cases Plotinus is articulating the same entity, an unnamed "trace" of soul that is produced in matter and itself no longer possesses productive power insofar as it is not a "true" form. It is, again, most likely Plotinus' version of an inseparable soul, akin to Aristotle's concept of the *entelekheia* (although this is certainly not the term he would choose to describe it), which he distinguished from both nature and the rational soul. It should be no surprise that he does not confront the questions of its exact relationship to the universal soul or of its role in the theory of the unity of soul, since most Platonists considered the inseparable soul to be closer in nature to the body than to soul. His assertion that the higher soul extends as far as plants—that is, as far as nature—is indication that he believed that the inseparable soul, to the extent that it (a) is merely a trace of soul, (b) is inferior to nature, and (c) cannot separate itself from matter, is not part of the unified soul.[105] We should expect him, then, to deem it something less than a form of soul, if by that phrase Plotinus means that "image" that is both a part or power of the immortal, separable soul, and is itself immortal and separable. Yet he clearly rejects what was to become Proclus' view of nature, and by implication his view of the inarticulate, inseparable forms, that is, that both are inferior to soul *simpliciter*.[106]

Both Neoplatonists, then, take the subject of the 'pre-cosmic' corporeal evil—the "nature of bodies" or the "corporeal nature"—to be

[105] V.2.1.23f. At I.1.8.18ff. Plotinus lists the first image of soul as perception; the series of images ends with the powers of generation and growth. Each of these images is a productive power, while the "dead" reason-principle created by nature is not. So the "trace" of soul in matter is not one of soul's images, which is another way of saying that it is not a "form" or "part" of soul.

[106] For Plotinus, nature brings life to the body, whereas for Proclus life is not invested in the body by the introduction of *phusis*, since nature is not a soul. Cf. Blumenthal (1971), 63 on *Enneads* VI.4.15.8–17. Nor does Plotinus refer to nature as an inseparable *entelekheia*, as does Proclus in reference to irrational nature. Cf. *In Tim*. III 299,31 – 300,20. Unlike Plotinus, then, Proclus does recognize the Aristotelian *entelekheia*, but, in deference to Plato's doctrine of an immortal and separable soul, he has transformed it into something that is inferior to soul. On this, see below.

the result of a mixture of matter with inseparable and irrational principles that are at least related to soul, if not, as Plotinus at times says, the last "traces" of soul. For both philosophers, that which is in disorderly motion is thus lifeless, deprived of definiteness, measure, and intelligence, and non-existent to the extent that the Demiurge has not yet brought its creative and providential powers to bear on it. That they differ on the status of nature, Plotinus deeming it a separable and immortal aspect of soul and Proclus regarding it as an inseparable and irrational power that is beneath soul, has certain implications for their respective views of corporeal evil. Both implicate nature in the generation of the evil of the body to the extent that, by introducing into matter imperfect or inarticulate form, it produces the motion that becomes chaotic through its lack of order.[107] It is thus involved, either directly or indirectly, in the creation of the 'pre-cosmic' evil that resides in the body-in-itself. By making nature a power that is sub-psychic, Proclus disassociates the soul in any of its manifestations from this evil. Nature is the last of the demiurgic causes and the only one that, to this extent at least, operates independently of divine Providence. He thus embraces one aspect of the Stoic concept of nature—it is inferior to soul although possessing some of soul's essential attributes—while at the same time rejecting another: nature's activity, or at least its irrational activity, does not derive directly from God. In regarding nature as inseparable from body, he also makes room for Aristotle's *entelekheia*, although he is sufficiently Platonic as to append the qualification that the *entelekheia* is not, properly speaking, a soul. Plotinus, on the other hand, not only considers nature to be an immortal part of soul, but even purports that the inseparable, "dead" reason-principle that combines with matter to produce the evil motion is, as a *logos*, in some sense itself a soul. The soul is therefore not absolved of all responsibility for the evil belonging to the body; as we have noted, in I.8.4 he refers to the inseparable soul that combines with matter to produce the disorderly motion as Plato's version of the evil, irrational soul.[108] Yet, to repeat again an important point, he makes it amply clear earlier in the same passage that the

[107] On the connection of nature with evil, and its related identification with Fate, in the Chaldaean Oracles and other sources, cf. Geudtner (1971), 56ff.

[108] At I.1.11.8ff. Plotinus takes up the problem in the claim by some that beasts have sinful human souls, which would seem to contradict his view that the higher soul, wherever it might be located, is sinless. His answer—that if the claim about beasts is true, then they do not truly possess the separable part of the soul—carries the implication that such evil resides in the inseparable soul.

disorderliness of the motion, which, strictly speaking, is the seat of the evil of the body, has as its exclusive source matter. The evil that here attaches to the inseparable soul is occasioned simply by the fact that it is mixed with matter. It can thus be only a secondary evil.

We must add, however, that both Neoplatonists as well, following a long tradition in Platonism, envisage a necessary and salutary function for nature in the process of creation.[109] It is the power that creates bodies and, after their creation, nourishes and sustains them. The latter activities, of course, belong to nature after it falls under the control of demiurgic Providence during the creation of the cosmos; but it is true as well that even nature's 'pre-cosmic' activity, when it generates the "nature of bodies" or the body-in-itself with its irrational motion, although in itself occurring 'before' the Demiurge begins his work, must ultimately be included within the rational cosmic plan.

Proclus on Nature II

We return to Proclus to see in more detail what place his treatment of *phusis* has in the Platonic tradition that we have summarized. If we probe more deeply into his treatment of nature, we find, first of all, that it is in the first of his two hypothetical phases of cosmic creation that he places nature, i.e. the demiurgic generation (*dêmiourgikê poiêsis*), the product of which is what he calls the "corporeal nature" (*sômatoeides*)[110] which has no part of *nous* or of the noeric soul. This hypothetical stage of creation was complete when the corporeal nature was "inspired" by nature, the result being that the corporeal is thrown into chaotic motion. What he is describing here is the act by which nature, which comes forth from the Paradigm in which it pre-exists,[111] brought traces (*ikhnê*) of the forms, by which Proclus understands forms that are not fully articulated, together with matter. What comes of the mixture is chaotic motion because, at this nascent point in creation, nothing that happens is guided by Intellect or noeric soul. Order is instilled in the disorderly motion during the second stage in creation, what Proclus terms the "ordering generation" (*kosmêtikê poiêsis*). Only then does the corporeal become body and the world ensouled, or rational.

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[109] Cf. Proclus at *DMS* c. 55: nature is the specific good of the body.
[110] He also identifies it with the "visible" reality (*horaton*) of *Tim.* 30a.
[111] *In Tim.* III 271,3 f. [4.12], where the "life-generating divinity" is the Paradigm.

These two phases of creation Proclus identifies with the two "lives" of the All that are at the basis of the *Statesman* myth, the first life coming under the supervision of the Demiurge and his providential activity and the second beginning when Plato separates the Demiurge from the cosmos and being marked by the "independent" rule of Fate, the essence of which, Plato alone acknowledged, is nature.[112] As with most of his Platonist forebears, Proclus maintained that, although this division of lives is only a mythic device, we must recognize a related conceptual dichotomy in all living beings, which is, as it were, the remnant of the primitive separation of chaos from order, Fate from Providence. Thus everything has a double life, one that is inherent to it—from its *phusis*—and the other separable from it—from its rational soul.[113] So far, then, he accepts the standard Platonist exegesis of Plato.

Yet—and here is where he, like Plotinus, gives a sympathetic nod toward the positions of Atticus and the Stoics—that the pre-cosmic corporeal nature is chaotic and irrational does not mean that it is completely outside the purview of Providence or the higher gods. For the corporeal nature, while not complete body, is qualified and possesses what Plotinus had called the nature of body, so it must come under the dominion of the Good. Providence, forming with Fate a single system of divine governance, extends to all levels of reality as well as to both stages of creation. Ultimately, God is the cause of everything, including matter and the first traces of the forms. This, of course, is an important principle of Proclan metaphysics. In his application of that principle, the Good is the cause of all parts of creation: of matter itself, of the implanting of the unarticulated forms in matter, and of bringing order to the mixture of matter and unarticulated forms, while the Paradigm is cause of only two of these three: of the implanting of the unarticulated forms and of bringing order to the mixture. The Demiurge is, solely with respect to his particular function as Craftsman, responsible for the bringing of order alone. This means that, at the point when the Demiurge produces the ordered universe, matter already exists and has been informed, albeit in an imperfect way. What we have here, then, is Proclus' version of Plutarch's dictum, one that is carried throughout the tradition in various guises, i.e. that creation is not simply the process of

[112] *In Tim.* III 273,19f. [4.13].
[113] *DMS* c. 60; see also *In Remp.* I 96,1ff.

bringing form to inert matter. But, again, this schema appears to leave Proclus open to the charge leveled against the Stoics, that by making the Good and the Paradigm responsible both for the generation of matter and the unarticulated forms as well as for their mixture, he thereby in the end makes them responsible for the resulting chaos, and hence of evil. We have discussed Proclus' various attempts to absolve himself of this charge, and have noted that he is not always at ease with the fact that the pre-cosmic disorder has its paradigm in the higher order of reality to the extent that the unarticulated forms, which are directly responsible for the chaotic motion of the corporeal, have their origin there. We must note that this is not a uniquely Proclan problem, but is inherent in Neoplatonic metaphysics. Thus, while Proclus goes much further than Plotinus in delineating the exact features of the connection between the One itself and the pre-cosmic chaos and in emphasizing the unbroken continuity between the two, the same direct causal linkage is largely implicit in the latter's interpretation of Plato.

Conclusion

At this point we begin to see that it was largely through their concept of nature that the Neoplatonists attempted to avoid the problem of denominating the cause of corporeal evil. Since Plato was thought to have recognized a pre-cosmic state of chaos from which emerged an ordered universe, Platonists were faced with the need to provide an adequate explanation of the process by which the one followed from the other. What proved the most perplexing was the question of how to account for the cause of the disorder that came to be before God began his creative work.[114] *Timaeus* 69c is Plato's story of how the lesser divinities implanted the mortal form of soul in body during the period of pre-cosmic disorder. Commentators naturally linked this account with earlier passages in the dialogue and elsewhere that were seen to be saying that the pre-cosmic disorder was a chaotic motion caused by the combination of a power of the irrational soul with matter. And this disorderly motion is the beginning of evil. These texts presented no problem to the dualists—Plutarch, Atticus, Numenius, and their

[114] A weakness in their interpretation of which Aristotle took full advantage; cf. *Meta.* 1071b31–1072a3.

followers—for whom the evil World Soul took the place of nature as the purely formal and motive cause of the pre-cosmic proto-body before the imposition of order by the rational World Soul/Demiurge, and who thus simply matched the mortal form of soul with the evil World Soul of *Laws* Book 10. For such philosophers the matter was uncomplicated: whatever causes motion in another thing must be a soul. But for many of those who denied the existence of such an evil soul in favor of a strictly monistic account of creation, it is impossible that the cause of such disorder, which is a motion, and thus the source of evil, could be soul, even if it is maintained to be the lowest degree of soul.[115] Plato would thus in effect be admitting the culpability of the divine world in the creation of evil insofar as, in the view of these monists, the provenance of all levels of soul is the intelligible realm. The problem is overcome, however, by recasting Plato's mortal form of soul as a version of the Stoic lower, irrational nature that is not soul but inferior to it, although possessing some of soul's attributes, the most important of which is self-movement. It is thus regarded either as related to soul without being one, as in Proclus' commentary, or as a soul so disempowered that it more properly belongs to the nature of body, as in Plotinus' account. In either case it can serve as a predominantly or entirely non-psychic source of motion, such that the divine order is not directly implicated in the pre-cosmic chaos, which is itself now viewed as a lack of order rather than a positive principle of evil, yet the source of the chaos is not cut off from that order. And because it is not divorced from the higher order—for indeed it originates in that higher order—nature can foster much that is good in the cosmos as well. So while agreeing with Atticus and certain Stoics that all strata of creation must be included under the purview of the Good if Plato

[115] The strength of Proclus' adherence to a monistic metaphysics is very interestingly displayed at *In Tim.* I 262,2–25, where he pairs Plato with the Pythagoreans as the only proponents of the correct doctrine of causality, according to which there are two principles of generation, God and Fate. This depiction of the Pythagorean doctrine matches what Calcidius relates, that the Pythagoreans (i.e. Numenius and his followers) recognized as independent causes of things both God and Necessity or Fate. But the Pythagorean doctrine as Calcidius describes it is thoroughly dualistic, so that Fate continues to act as an independent principle alongside God in the created cosmos. Proclus, however, perhaps following the more monistic Pythagoreans who were the targets of Numenius' scorn, completely reconfigures the entire Pythagorean tradition, boldly reinterpreting their doctrine as the precursor of Platonic monism whereby God and Fate are cooperative components of a single chain of causation and Fate is but the instrument of divine Providence.

is not to be accused of the sort of dualistic cosmogony ascribed to him by Plutarch and Numenius, the Neoplatonists rejected their conclusion that, as a consequence, the source of motion at each level must be a manifestation of the rational soul.

EVIL AS PRIVATION: THE SOUL

For many Platonists disputes regarding the extent to which the soul is responsible for its own sinful actions are to be decided ultimately by consideration of the question of whether its sinfulness is part of its essence, or rather reaches only as far as its powers or activities. Proclus deals at length with the two extreme positions on this issue, the theory of an evil World Soul most famously advanced by Plutarch and Atticus and the view of Plotinus that the soul comes to sin only subsequent to its descent through its contact with matter. In the next chapters we shall take a careful look at his treatment of each of these positions.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE EVIL WORLD SOUL

Texts

5.1 [*DMS* c. 25, p. 204,1–15] We must now consider other souls that have no part in being but are certain images, parts of the more degenerate soul that the Athenian Stranger calls "maleficent," whether they have no propensity to evil or evil exists in them also, but in a different manner. If they are worse than the soul of humans—I mean than that image that is in us—evil for them is not acting in accordance with nature. Good and evil will not be in them in the same manner as they are in our souls which always alternate between good and evil. But if they are parts of another soul that is antecedent to them, just as are our souls, then it is clearly necessary that, as the superior soul is capable of worse or better, so its image should follow it, sometimes pursuing what is above and other times descending into generation and the sphere of matter. For as irrationality is dependent on reason, inferiority consists in the opposition to reason, not receiving its light or taking care of its own lack of measure by the measure that is there. That lack of measure was not its power, but weakness and defect of power…

5.2 [*DMS* c. 40, pp. 228,1 – 230,21] In what follows we shall examine evil as it is in itself and its nature. But before this we shall look at the causes of evils, [to determine] whether or not all of them have one and the same cause. For some say that they do while others disagree. Those who speak of one source of evils derive from it every sort of evil; others, establishing as the principle of the nature of evil an active power of evil in souls, assert that from this evils are generated; still others, taking a position between these two, leave the forms of evils in the intellective nature and confess that it is from here that evils, like all other things, proceed. Some of these thinkers employ various hypotheses to form their conclusions, while others make Plato the father of their doctrines. Of the latter group, some locate the forms of all things in the intellective sphere and call as witness Socrates in *Theaetetus* who establishes two

models, one divine and the other without god. Others refer to the Athenian Stranger who admits two kinds of soul, one beneficent and the other its contrary, and says that the All is governed by one of these souls only, but the mortal sphere is governed by both. On the whole, if we are to say that there is one cause of evils, we should regard it as divine, intelligible, and psychic. For the gods, intellects, and souls have been given the rank of causes, while other things are their instruments, and certain others are likenesses and images formed in another being.

5.3 [*DMS* c. 45, pp. 236,1 – 238,27] Thirdly, then, we must consider the soul, whether we are to count that soul that we refer to as the "evil-doer" as the cause of all evils. Is it the case that, as it is the function of fire to heat and not to cool and for each thing there is its proper function, so it is the function of this soul to generate evil and infect with evil all things that it comes near? Or is its basic nature always good, although in its activities it at times achieves what is good, while at others it achieves what is worse, projecting in the same order different lives at different times? If, then, for the latter reason the soul is said to be maleficent, we must say that not only the irrational soul, but also the higher soul from which good comes is maleficent. For there exists in this soul as well a transformation of its condition toward what is better or worse. But if, as some say, it is evil in its essence and being, what shall we consider to be the source of this being? Is it therefore from some source other than from the demiurgic cause or from the gods in the world? How could it not come from those gods from whom arises the mortal form of life? But if it does derive from them, how could it be an evil with respect to its substance? For all things that are generated from the gods are good; and in general every evil is outside of substance and is not substance. For nothing is contrary to substance, but good is contrary to evil. Substance is the image of being, while being is grounded in the good and generates all things in accordance with the good, and nothing evil can come from there. But if the Athenian Stranger refers to such a soul as "evil-doer" (*Laws* 896e5–6) because of that evil that infects its powers and activities, [it is] not everlasting [in its evil], but, as I have elsewhere expressed it, if it sometimes takes on the form of the good and adapts its own activities to the higher soul, what wonder is it? For it is the nature of one soul to preserve itself, while another cannot turn toward itself. And the sinful soul that takes on the form of the good possesses through itself measure and reason,

while the other comes by them from another source, since, in the case of the body and all things that receive motion from an external source, both their being and their well-being come through something outside it and are, as it were, extrinsic to it.

5.4 [*DMS* c. 46, p. 238,1–21] It is baseless and defenseless, so to speak, to make such a soul the cause of evils. For neither is it for the body the cause of all the evils in it nor is it for the higher soul… But how evil exists in this soul and why Plato calls it "evil-doer" has been addressed sufficiently for the present. For its measurelessness and indeterminacy are contrary to the measure and limits that derive from reason, and not only is this soul deprived of these things, but it does not desire to acquire them. And so if anyone regards this soul, he will call it maleficent and contrary to reason, not insofar as it has received such a nature, but insofar as it both inclines downward and has the ability through its own power to be drawn toward what is better.

5.5 [*In Tim.* I 381,26 – 382,10] The followers of Plutarch of Chaeronea and Atticus seize upon these words [*Tim.* 30a] as confirming the creation of the cosmos in time, and they say that disordered matter pre-exists creation, and that also the evil-doing Soul that is the motive cause of this discordance pre-exists [creation]. For what could be the source of the motion except a Soul? If the motion is disorderly, then it is from a disordered soul. So it is said in *Laws* [897b] that the good-resembling soul "governs rightly and intelligently," but the evil-doing soul moves in a disorderly way and brings that which is governed by it into discordance. After the creation of the cosmos by the Demiurge, matter was transformed in accordance with the structure of the cosmos, while the evil-doing soul, having now a share in Intellect, reaches its fulfillment as rational and its motion is brought to order. Participation in form leads the former, and the presence of Intellect leads the latter, into order. The followers of Porphyry and Iamblichus rebuke this doctrine because it places disorder in the wholes before the created order, [and establishes] the incomplete before the complete and that which is devoid of intelligibility before what is intellective, committing impiety not only against the cosmos, but also against the Demiurge himself, and in turn entirely stripping him either of his good will or of his creative power. For necessarily the cosmos is fashioned eternally by him when both of these attributes coalesce.

5.6 [*In Tim.* I 391,6 – 392,25] First he [Porphyry] turns to the followers of Atticus…who say that matter, which is moved by a soul that is ungenerated, but irrational and an evil-doer, is carried in a discordant and disorderly manner; they also make the existence of matter temporally precede that of what is sensible, irrationality temporally precede reason, and disorder temporally precede order… Moreover, it is absurd to make evil eternal just as the Good. For what lacks divinity does not have the same status as the divine, nor is it ungenerated in the same sense or completely opposed to division… Moreover, if the term "receptive" applies both to what is brought to order and to what establishes order, what is the source of their receptivity? For there must be something else that connects the two and makes them commensurate with each other. Since they are separate from and oppose each other, they cannot make themselves receptive to merging. Unless, that is, they say that this comes about spontaneously, ignoring the Athenian Stranger's statement (*Laws* 891c) that "this is the source of unintelligent thinking," if someone says that irrationality exists before reasoning and that chance rules before intelligent design… Still it is necessary to distinguish the highest principle not only in this way, by virtue of the fact that it has no other principle—for this by itself does not yet reveal its value—but by virtue of the fact that all things derive from it. But if this is the case, then there would not be more than one principle. For then [on the prior hypothesis] God will not be the cause of all things, but of some things. But if he also is the principle of matter, then there is one principle and not many.

5.7 [*In Tim.* I 394,9–15] …Nor does some irrational soul move that which is carried in a discordant and irrational motion. For every soul is a creation of the gods. Nor wholly does the All become ordered from a state of disorder. For if God wills to lead all things to order, how does he will it? Always or sometimes? If sometimes, then this [intermittent willing] occurs either through him or through matter. If through him, it would be absurd. For he is always good.

5.8 [*In Tim.* II 153,25 – 154,1] Some [exegetes], regarding the divided Essence as physical, say that this Essence, being irrational, exists before the rational Essence, but the divine Essence is undivided, and they fashion the logical essence (*sc.* of soul) from these two essences, the one regarded as the ordering principle and the other as the underlying principle, as do Plutarch and Atticus, and they say that this logical

essence is uncreated with respect to its substratum, but created with respect to its [mixed] form.

5.9 [*In Tim.* II 154,15–18] To this third [group of exegetes] we should say that he [Plato] does not want the irrational soul to be older than the rational soul. For as he said, God did not think it right that what is older be ruled by what is younger.

5.10 [*In Remp.* I 37,3–8] There is a problem regarding the first of the points that have been demonstrated by Plato: Whence evils? For if they come from God, then the argument that God is the cause of good things only is false. And if they come from another source, and that source comes from God, then much more is God the cause of evils. But if evils do not come from God, then there are more than one principle, one of goods and another of evils.

5.11 [*Th. Pl.* I 18, pp. 87,22 – 88,10] Hence no one should tell us that there are in nature antecedent rational principles of evils, or intellective paradigms in the same way as there are for good things, or an evil-doing soul (*psukhên kakergatin*), nor should he hypothesize among the gods a cause that is productive of evil or introduce an everlasting uprising and war against the first Good. [88] For all of these concepts are foreign to the thinking of Plato and wander far from the truth, approaching the madness of the barbarians and a theatrical production of the war of the Giants. Nor, if any concoct such ideas using enigmatic language couched in forbidden terms, should we substitute this obvious fabrication for proof. But we must seek out their truth while allowing Plato's thinking to enter the pure recesses of our soul uncontaminated, keeping it unsullied and without contact with opposing doctrines.

Analysis

Introduction

In chapters 45–46 [5.3–4] of *DMS* Proclus takes up the third possibility as the original source of all evils, the soul that the Athenian Stranger in *Laws* 896e refers to as the "evil-doer." This is the evil World Soul that is introduced in *Laws* as a merely hypothetical cause of the "irrational and disorderly" motion in the cosmos. Proclus questions whether such

a Soul should be considered evil in its essence or merely in its activities through some sort of "transformation of its condition." If in fact it is evil in itself, then we could not account for its cause. For souls at all levels are generated by gods, whether it be the Demiurge or the "gods in the world," and divine causes can produce only what is good. Proclus has in mind here *Timaeus* 69c ff. where a distinction is made between the creation of the eternal World Soul by the Demiurge himself and the production of the "mortal form" of soul by the lesser gods who are offspring of the Demiurge. We have already discussed other contexts in which this passage figures prominently in Proclus' theory of evil. Here he is concerned to show that evil cannot belong to the substance of soul at any level, but is merely a display of its weakness and powerlessness. In doing so he addresses an important tradition of exegesis of Plato's accounts of the creation both of the cosmos and, in particular, of the soul. Consideration of similar discussions in his earlier commentaries will reveal that here, as there, his focus is to counter a group of commentators, in particular, once more, the Middle Platonists Plutarch and Atticus, whose reading of the dialogues is decidedly dualistic.[1]

The Dualists

1. Plutarch

In the middle of his long exegesis of the *psukhogonia* or creation of soul in Plato (*In Tim.* II, 152,24–154,26), Proclus turns his attention to competing interpretations of various individuals and their followers that preceded him, giving a brief description and critique of each position. In all, he discusses six views, including those of Eratosthenes, Numenius, Severus, Plutarch, Atticus, Plotinus, and Theodorus of Asine.[2] Although Proclus gives no overt indication as to which if any of these positions he

[1] On this concept see Hager (1962), 81ff.; Waszink (1979), 361f.; Festugière (1983), 208f. and 221; Opsomer and Steel (1999[2]), 236ff. Brisson (1974) claims that, faced both with the need to defend the transcendence of their highest God against Stoic materialism and with their commitment to a concept of matter as completely indeterminate, the Middle Platonists were forced to conclude that the cause of the pre-cosmic chaos described by Plato was an irrational World Soul (63). The Neoplatonists, on the other hand, were under no such compulsion, since they had a different answer to the problem posed by the relationship between the supreme God and matter (302f.).

[2] His sources for these descriptions are Porphyry and Antoninus, pupil of Ammonius. Cf. *in Tim.* II 154,6ff.

might have found especially objectionable, there is no doubt when one reads the whole of his exegesis that he is most concerned to refute the—by his time infamous—interpretation associated with both Plutarch and Atticus.[3] Drawing extensively from Porphyry and Iamblichus, Proclus rejects their strongly dualistic exegesis of Plato's account of the creation of the both the cosmos and soul in *Timaeus*. The Neoplatonic criticism focuses on three of their most celebrated claims: (1) that the universe was created in time, (2) that disordered matter pre-existed this creation, and (3) that a pre-existent, evil World Soul, which Plato hypothesizes in *Laws* 896d–897d, introduced an irrational and chaotic movement into this disordered matter.[4] Thus there are two principles, matter and the World Soul or active force of evil, that exist independently of the supreme principle of the Good. Looking to *Timaeus* 30a, the dualists understood both the creation of the cosmos and the generation of the essence of soul as, in effect, the temporal process of the demiurgic God imposing rational order on a pre-existing, irrational principle of evil. This same dynamic is played out in the generated World Soul that, according to their interpretation of *Timaeus* 35a, is created through a mixture of good and evil natures. The problems that these claims posed for all orthodox Platonists in their attempts to present what to them was a faithfully Platonic theory of the nature of soul were of particular

[3] Proclus also especially objected to the interpretations of Eratosthenes and Severus insofar as they expressed or implied that there is a divisible, bodily element in the nature of soul. Cf. *In Tim.* II 152,24ff.

[4] *In Tim.* I 381,26ff. [5.5] and 391,4ff. [5.6]. Cf. Opsomer (2001²). If we are to judge from the frequency of its occurrence, what Proclus considered to be one of the most important points to be made in his polemic against the doctrine of Plutarch and Atticus is that in Plato's *psukhogonia* the Demiurge did not simply bring to order a pre-existing substrate of soul, since, according to *Timaeus* 35a, he first created the three constituent elements of soul, generating its essence from a mixture of the undivided and divided Essences and, separately from this mixture, producing the Same and the Other as well. Then from these existing elements, which served as a kind of generated substrate, he created the soul proper. And if he created the constituent elements of soul as well as the mixture that is soul itself, it follows that he created the whole soul, not just part of it. Within the soul so constituted God fashioned all that is bodily (*In Tim.* I 383,24f.), so that in his creation he did not merely add to what already existed.

Proclus accepts Plutarch's argument (1) that the disorderly motion of *Timaeus* 30a is the source of evil in the world, (2) that, by its nature, matter cannot be the source of evil, and (3) that therefore Plato's disorderly motion is not to be identified with matter (cf. *DMS* cc. 34–35). What he rejects is the idea that this motion is to be identified with some pre-existent soul that operates in active opposition to the Good. For, of course, it is the hallmark of Proclus' theory of evil that even the principle of all evil must have a share in the Good. For Porphyry's opposition to the dualism of Plutarch and Atticus, see Dörrie (1965), 176ff. For that of Iamblichus, see Dillon (1987), 898f.

concern to Proclus as well as to his predecessors and much of his discussion of the *psukhogonia* is fashioned as a reaction to them. We should, then, begin with a look at the position of Plutarch and Atticus[5] and then consider Proclus' answer to it.

In 5.8–9 Proclus discusses the well-known exegesis of Plato's *psukhogonia* by Plutarch and Atticus according to which (a) the soul of the All is a compound of two Essences, one divided and "physical" and the other undivided and divine and (b) the former serves as the "substratum" of the latter in the composition of this soul. Thus, among other problems, the two philosophers make the ungenerated irrational soul older than the generated, yet rational World Soul. This exegesis is presented *in toto* by Plutarch in his treatise *On the Creation of Soul in the Timaeus*. As with Proclus, Plutarch's arguments there are in large part in response to the exegeses of earlier Platonists, principally Xenocrates and Crantor. One of his fundamental objections to the interpretations of both thinkers is their shared view that neither the soul nor the cosmic body comes to be in time nor is in any sense generated and that therefore Plato's descriptions of the coming to be of the world and of the mixture by which soul is formed are not to be taken literally but are given for the purpose of instruction.[6] Such reasoning constitutes an unwarranted intrusion of these philosophers' own groundless assumptions into Plato's text and contradicts Plato's clear intentions in the dialogue; here, however, Plutarch is less concerned with this misjudgment than with other, more complex errors in the doctrine of each thinker.

Plutarch's interpretation of Plato is by his own admission heterodox.[7] Central to it is what came to be the controversial concept of a pre-cosmic, evil World Soul. What results is a doctrine that preserves soul's immortality but not its essential goodness. Plato, Plutarch surmised, recognized, as others later did not, that in the creation of the physical world there was need of three principles: a good and rational Demiurge, matter (*hulê*) or essence (*ousia*), and Necessity (*anankê*), the last

[5] For an analysis of Plutarch's account, see Thévenaz (1938). It should be noted that Atticus does not merely duplicate Plutarch's doctrine of the soul, but makes several not insignificant modifications to it. However, these changes are for the purposes of this study essentially irrelevant, and so it will not be necessary to distinguish the two exegetes or to consider Atticus' exegesis separately. Cf. Deuse (1983), 48ff.; Dillon (1996), 444f.; Baltes (1983), 46f.; Moraux (1984), 571f.

[6] 1013A, p. 145,21ff. This view is also attributed to them by Proclus, who adds that Crantor as well interpreted Plato to mean that the world was (non-temporally) generated insofar as it is dependent on a higher principle/cause (*In Tim.* I 277,8ff.).

[7] 1014A, p. 147,24ff.

of which Plutarch conceives as self-moved (that is, eternal), the principle of movement in other things, and in particular the motive force of matter. This triad of principles in a real sense represents the coalescence of the Aristotelian concept of matter as substrate with the Receptacle and Place (*khôra*) of *Timaeus*, as well as with other characteristically Platonic elements of creation, which in the view of Plutarch, drawing chiefly from *Timaeus* 30a and 52d ff. and the cosmogonical myth of *Statesman*, involves a period of pre-cosmic chaotic activity before the generation of a rational cosmos, with its rational World Soul, through the imposition of order by the Demiurge. Hence Plutarch's attack against the Stoic theory that the substrate of soul is matter: if we are to understand matter to be the Aristotelian substrate that is formless, inert, and lacking all quality, then it cannot account for the disorderly motion, and all that this motion implies, which the Demiurge brings to order and rational harmony. And if matter cannot be the source of its own motion, then neither can it be the origin of evil which Plato made part of the pre-cosmic Necessity. According to Plato's own doctrine such a principle must be a primal, ungenerated soul. So Plutarch makes Necessity something entirely distinct from the Receptacle, recognizing it as a separate principle which he regards as soul in its original state: irrational and chaotic, it is the evil World Soul whose existence, at least in Plutarch's interpretation, Plato confirmed in *Laws* 896d–897d. Thus the state of disorder (*akosmia*) which exists before creation of the world is the result of the mixture of matter and this evil soul, possessing both a formless corporeal element and an irrational kinetic—that is to say, psychic—part.[8]

Plutarch's account of the creation of the cosmos, then, includes, in addition to the undivided Nature or *nous*, two other cosmic causal principles, matter and the primal soul that is in chaotic motion, these latter existing in combination as the *akosmia*. For a Platonist like Plutarch, however, the generation of soul cannot involve matter. In his treatise on the generation of soul he singles out Crantor for special criticism, especially his perceived identification of the divided essence of *Timaeus* 35a with matter, such that the generation of Soul becomes indistinguishable from that of physical bodies. The nature of the generated Soul is a mixture of the primal Soul, which Plutarch terms "soul in itself" (*psukhê kath' autên*) and identifies with the divided Nature,[9] with the undivided

[8] Cf. 1014A, p. 148,14 ff.
[9] On Plutarch's "soul-in-itself" cf. Deuse (1983), 12 ff. and 42 ff.

Essence, and the mixture is understood as the imposition of order by the undivided Nature on the chaotic soul. The generation of the rational World Soul is the result of a subsequent blending of this generated psychic nature with the Same and Other. So in an absolute sense neither the corporeal world nor the rational soul is created; rather, both are brought to an ordered existence from a pre-existing state of disorder by the demiurgic God.

2. Numenius

Calcidius summarizes Numenius' theory of an evil World Soul as follows:

> …Numenius also applauds Plato because he acknowledges two souls of the world, one of the highest beneficence and the other evil, that is to say matter which, although its motion is chaotic, nevertheless, since its motion derives from its own interior movement, necessarily is alive and possesses the life of a soul according to the law governing all things that move through a natural motion… (*In Tim.* c. 297, p. 299,14–17)

To this we may add the following account of the role of the evil primal Soul in the production of the human soul:

> Therefore let there be a soul suitable to the sensible world, generated from one indivisible Nature that is Mind and Intellect, and another [nature] that is divided and dispersed among bodies; let it come forth situated between the undivided and divided souls, so that [part of it] might remain always in the intelligible world, unaffected by embodiment [*immunis quidem ab incorporatione in mundo esset intellegibili semper*], while its physical part might assist those beings that are mute and insentient;[10] thus this intermediate soul, since it was necessary that there exist in the world a race of animals that employ reason, could provide life and breath to this race; and, situated between two Natures, the Same and the Other, it could on the one hand contemplate the divinity of the Nature of the Same by raising its vision toward the higher regions, and on the other, turning to the lower sphere and realm of the Nature of the Other, it could equally distribute the decrees of the Demiurge and impart Providence to the beings of this world. (*In Tim.* c. 31, p. 81,7–18)

Numenius thus praised Plato for recognizing not one, but two pre-existent[11] souls, one the beneficent creator and sustainer of order in

[10] Of course, soul inherits these characteristics from the constituent ingredients of its mixture, the undivided Nature being a *immuni ab incorporatione anima* and the divided nature a *inseparabili corporum comite, id est stirpea* (c. 31, p. 80,11–12).

[11] Numenius presents arguments for the pre-existence of the evil soul at Calcidius,

the world and the other evil and the source of all evil that comes into the world.[12] The first of these souls he identifies with the undivided Essence of *Timaeus* 35a and with the Monad, which, being intelligible, is also Mind and Intellect, the Nature immune to embodiment, and the genus of all intelligible being.[13] The second, which is co-eternal with the undivided Essence, he equates with the Essence that is divided among bodies.[14] While his notion that the divided Essence is itself an evil soul echoes the dualistic interpretation of Plutarch and Atticus, other aspects of his conception of the creation of the rational soul and the cosmos represent a significant departure from their doctrine. First of all, although he, like most Platonists, equated the undivided Essence with Intellect,[15] Numenius went further than most in regarding Intellect as another, higher soul. Thus there are two co-eternal souls by which the Demiurge fashions the rational World Soul, one rational and the other irrational, rather than a single, primal soul from which is generated the rational soul, as in the doctrines of Plutarch and Atticus. Secondly, and more importantly, he directly contradicts one of the fundamental tenets of his predecessors by identifying the Essence that is divided among bodies with pre-existent matter, which he also equates both with Necessity[16] and the chaotic motion of *Timaeus* 30a. Numenius thus directly contradicts their view that motion must come to matter externally, for matter *intimo proprioque motu movetur*. Plutarch

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In Tim. c. 31, p. 80,19 – 81,7. Cf. Van Winden (1959), 255ff.; Theiler (1955), 73ff.; Dodds (1957), 7ff. (and the comments of Peuch, 39); Baltes (1975), 244ff.; Frede (1987), 1070ff.; Alt (1993), 32ff.

[12] Cf. Mansfeld (1992), 295ff. Mansfeld notes that, in their dualistic treatments of good and evil, "…Plutarch and Numenius are (original and creative) representatives of a definitive development, or tradition, in Middle Platonism and Later Pythagoreanism" (298). Such a dualism, he adds, had already been attributed to Pythagoras (by Aëtius) and Plato (by Aristotle) before Plutarch and Numenius.

[13] Cf. *In Tim.* c. 27, p. 78,4; c. 29, p. 79,15; and c. 31, p. 80,11f. and p. 81,8f.

[14] Cf. *In Tim.* c. 27, p. 78,3–6; c. 31, p. 81,9f.; and Proclus, *In Tim.* II 153,17–25 (= Frg. 39).

[15] *Quare cum sensili mundo conveniens anima instituatur, ortum eius ex individua una, quae mens intellectusque est…* (*In Tim.* c. 31, p. 81,7–9).

[16] Hence another disagreement with Plutarch, who identifies Necessity with soul rather than matter. It is perhaps significant that Plotinus follows Numenius on this question. Cf. Baltes (1975), 248, n. 33; Alt (1993), 32; Waszink (1979), 68f. Proclus, of course, argues strongly against making Necessity, which he identifies with matter, an independent principle of evil. We should remember, however, that, for a more general standpoint, the theories of Plutarch, Atticus, and Numenius all are to a large extent based on the belief that, if matter is the principle of evil, then evil in the world has no real cause.

and Atticus had based their differentiation of the irrational motion from matter on the well-established claim that matter, lacking quality and potency, cannot be the cause of anything; disorder originated upon the subsequent blending of the irrational soul with matter. Numenius eschews the idea of a completely passive and empty matter by making the irrational soul a part or aspect of it, and regarding this soul as the power that gives to matter its irrational movement and, as the active principle of life, lends to what would otherwise be a completely passive substrate the power to oppose the ordering activity of the Demiurge.[17] Plutarch had recognized this conception of matter as a possibility and had addressed it, arguing that we can conceive of the divided Essence as matter only homonymously, i.e. only to the extent that it serves as the substrate for the created soul, since if the two are identified there is no way of distinguishing the generation of soul from that of body. For his part Numenius may have been influenced by Plato's account of matter's agency in *Timaeus* 52e ff., where the irrational motion is caused in part by matter "shaking" the traces of the elements. His argument would then be that this motion of matter, while irrational and disorderly, must be internal to it, so that, by the law of natural motion, matter is necessarily alive, and consequently has the life-giving power exclusively associated with soul.

By imbuing matter with a soul, Numenius was in effect attempting a reconciliation of what later Platonists thought to be the Platonic idea of matter as active in the process of creation with the Aristotelian view of matter as pure passivity.

> So the Stoics and Pythagoras agree that matter is without form and lacks quality, while, on the one hand, Pythagoras considers it to be evil and, on the other, the Stoics deem it neither good nor evil. When, as it were advancing further on their path, they [the Stoics], confront evils and are asked, "What, then, is the source of evils?", they attribute the origin of evils to a perversity. They do not thereby explain the source of the perversity itself, since in their view there are two principles of things, God and matter, God being the supreme and excellent Good and matter, they believe, being neither good nor evil. But Pythagoras is not afraid to stand on the side of truth by making claims that are striking and oppose the opinions of people. He says that the existence of

[17] There is agreement among a number of scholars that, rather than simply identifying them, Numenius regarded the evil soul and matter as two aspects of the same principle, with matter as the dominating element. Cf. Baltes (1975), 247 f.; Alt (1993), 32; Waszink (1979), 68 f. For the opposing view of Theiler, cf. Baltes (1975), 247.

> Providence necessarily involves the existence of evils, because evil exists and at the same time is endowed with evil. Since if the world is composed of matter, it was clearly formed out of a pre-existing, evil nature. For this reason Numenius praises Heraclitus for criticizing Homer, who wanted the removal and destruction of evils in life because he did not understand that he was thus choosing the demise of the world, insofar as matter, which is the source of evil, would be expunged… [*In Tim.* c. 297, p. 299,1–13]
>
> Thus according to Plato the proper goods were meted to the world by the generosity of God as father, but evil attached itself to it through the vice of its mother, matter. For this reason we are given to understand that the Stoics for no good reason attributed causality to some perversity, when they say that what comes to be does so from the motion of the stars… And so if God corrected it [*sc.* matter] and returned it to order from a "discordant and disorderly motion," then clearly this chaotic instability of matter came about by a certain chance and unlucky fortune, and not by the salutary dictates of Providence. Thus according to Pythagoras the soul of matter does not lack a kind of substance, as most think, and opposes Providence, longing to frustrate its dictates through the power of its evil. But Providence is the product and function of God, while blind and fortuitous chance has matter as its source. It is therefore manifest, according to Pythagoras, that all of reality is created through the joint efforts of God and matter, as well as of Providence and fortune, but after matter was brought to order, it became the mother of corporeal and generated gods. To a great extent it is a beneficial contingency, but not completely, since its natural defect could not be entirely eliminated. [c. 298, pp. 300,4 – 301,3]

Against both the Stoics and certain fellow Pythagoreans, Numenius presented what he felt was the truly Pythagorean (and Platonic) position that God cannot be cause of the disorder that he subsequently adorns with reason and harmony. As matter, the disorder is completely indeterminate and formless, yet, inasmuch as it has a soul, it is also a being that is self-moved and possesses substance, and so is capable of resisting the ordering power of Providence.[18] As a consequence, however, we are left with a universe in which Providence and an intransigent evil exist alongside one another so that, although the power of divine Providence is greater, evil is entirely independent of it, for it had a separate cause. It is against this sort of strong dualism that most later Platonist vehemently reacted and, if he is here paraphrasing a

[18] Calcidius, *In Tim.* cc. 295–298.

work of Numenius, Calcidius provides us with evidence that Numenius and his Pythagorean followers were sensitive to attacks directed against them, while at the same time they remained adamant in their intent to espouse a doctrine that flatly contradicted Platonic orthodoxy.

In its turn, Numenius' ensouled matter becomes the causal principle of the irrational, i.e. divided, human soul. The two pre-cosmic souls are the causal principles of all creation, including the generation of the World Soul, of human souls, and of physical bodies.[19] Souls and bodies alike, then, are created in the same way from the same constituent parts, i.e. from a blending of the undivided and divided Essences. In each case the mixture forms a single nature which God then divides according to principles of harmony and mathematical ratios.[20] Souls and bodies are thereby intermediate beings sharing in both unity and diversity, although not in the same proportion. Like most Platonists, Numenius, when he expresses the intermediate status of soul, lays special emphasis on Plato's statement that in the generation of soul the mixture produced an independent essence existing separately from, although in its activity still being largely determined by, its two constituent essences.[21]

Numenius' doctrine of an evil World Soul is the foundation for his strongly dualistic psychology. As a mixture of the Monad and Dyad the generated World Soul manifests characteristics of both and as such is a being divided in unity, participating in both the first God and matter. In its contact with matter it exhibits both active and passive aspects: on the one hand it unifies matter while on the other it is divided by

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[19] That soul and bodies share the same generative principles is, of course, implicit in Numenius' interpretation of Plato's second mixture as an account of the creation of the physical world, since both this and the first mixture through which soul is created have the undivided and divided Essences as constituent parts.

[20] Division of bodies: *In Tim.* c. 28; division of soul: c. 52.

[21] But in his interpretation of the nature of this new essence we find once more an approach that diverges sharply from that of Plutarch and Atticus. As we have seen, Plutarch regarded the generated essence merely as the substrate of the rational World Soul, which comes to be only with the second mixture of this derived essence with the Same and the Other. Numenius, however, regards it as the World Soul itself, which thus is generated in its entirety from the first mixture; in the second mixture of the newly created soul with the Same and the Other described in *Timaeus* 36b Plato is, in Numenius' view, describing the generation of the physical cosmos. The result is that the World Soul becomes part of the essence of all living things in the created universe.

it.[22] These characteristics are to a large extent mirrored in the human soul. To summarize from Calcidius, it was Numenius' view that in the creation of the divided human soul the blending of the two pre-existing souls results in a third essence composed of two parts, one irrational and the product of primal matter and the other rational, deriving from the divine undivided Essence which is transcendent to bodies. It is clear that the Numenian World Soul—and, we may surmise, the human soul—is engaged in a double activity, directing its contemplation at the same time upward and downward toward its two constituent Essences. It is safe to conclude from this that soul's superiority to the corporeal world that it administers is guaranteed by that part of it that remains undescended and in constant touch with the intelligible soul that is a *mens*. And it is likely this double activity that further separates the constitution of soul from that of bodies. Correspondingly, in the same passage we find reference to two different but simultaneous states of the World Soul, one in which it resides in the intelligible world and another in which it is part of the physical world. We may infer that its ability to sustain its higher unity in its immersion in diversity is dependent on the divine aspect of its nature that remains eternally undescended and therefore unaffected by embodiment, for it is toward that Essence that resides in the intelligible world that soul constantly looks and to which it remains tied even in its contact with the differentiation of the physical world. We may suppose, too, that before embodiment the divided element of the generated soul remains itself an unalloyed unity in its participation in Intellect; that only subsequently, in the creation of the cosmos, is it 'divided' among bodies; and that even when so divided this participation remains entirely intact to the extent that the superior part of soul remains undescended. The rational soul therefore is in all respects unaffected by the sinfulness of the lower soul.[23] Numenius could thus maintain, against Plutarch and Atticus, that the soul's sinfulness is not natural to it to the extent that its nature is determined by its superior constituent part, but comes to it externally from matter.[24] For if the essence of soul—that is, the undescended, divine Intellect—is its controlling element, then the soul

[22] Cf. Eusebius, *Pr. ev.*, xi, 17,11–18; p. 536d–537b V.; II, p. 40,9 – 41,5 Mras (= Frg. 11, p. 53).

[23] A position, as we shall see, with which Plotinus agreed, but which Proclus opposed.

[24] Cf. Iamblichus *De anima*, *ap.* Stobaeus., I 49,37; p. 375,12–18 = frg. 43, p. 91,7ff.

itself is not by nature evil.[25] The irrational soul, on the other hand, is inseparable from bodies[26] and so subject not only to the effects of its own disordered activity, but also to the evils of the physical world. According to Porphyry, Numenius claimed that the soul thus divided is not composed of parts but is constituted of two separate souls, the undivided and divided Essences, which, we may assume, are in continuous and irreconcilable hostility to each other.[27] This would suggest that, in the case of the human soul, the control of form over matter is never complete.[28] If Porphyry's account is accurate, then Numenius' conception of the soul is significantly more dualistic than that of Plutarch and Atticus.

Numenius' interpretation of Plato, like Plutarch's, was in large part intended as a reaction against the Stoics who, both commentators felt, in their flawed doctrine of a world governed by two principles, an active God and a completely passive matter lacking all qualification, offered no adequate explanation for the origin of evil. Certainly Stoic matter cannot serve as the cause of anything; and it is absurd to make the divine realm accountable. Plutarch's answer was to add a third principle, the evil soul-in-itself. Numenius responded very differently by redefining the nature of matter in a 'Platonic' manner. Matter, then, is no longer the Aristotelian substrate that derives its chaotic motion from an external source; rather, the 'pre-cosmic' motion—that is to say, the source of all evil—is intrinsic to it. God is thus absolved of any responsibility for either natural evils or the wickedness of souls, remaining, as the undivided essence and divine Intellect, an entirely transcendent power even when it is made a constituent of the created soul.

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[25] This is the essence of Plotinus' doctrine of the undescended soul. I have argued elsewhere for the likelihood that Plotinus is indebted to Numenius in the formulation of his doctrine; cf. Phillips (2003).

[26] Cf., e.g., Calcidius, *In Tim.* c. 31, p. 80,12: …*item alia inseparabili corporum comite, id est stirpea*…

[27] Porphyry, *ap.* Stobaeus, I 49,25a; p. 350,25 – 351,1. On the inconsistency in Numenius' doctrine of the unity/diversity of Soul, see Baltes (1975), 244ff. and Waszink (1979), 76f.

[28] Cf. Calcidius, *In Tim.* c. 299, where we find that after generation of the cosmos, the irrational motion of matter never completely disappears.

Conclusion

Proclus clearly does not accept that the dualists have thereby absolved themselves of the charge that they have made God responsible for the evil that certainly does exist (despite what the Stoics maintain) in the cosmos. For, by making the source of evil an eternal principle, he claims, they contradict the two central truths of any legitimate doctrine of evil: that God must be the cause of all that exists and that, consequently, all that exists is ultimately good by necessity. As Proclus himself notes, even if it is claimed that evil originates not through God but through a maleficent soul, God is no less responsible for the evil that it generates, since, according to the Neoplatonic account of creation, he must be that soul's creator. Moreover, the dualists misconceive the creation of the cosmos as a temporal process in which irrationality precedes rationality, chance precedes a fixed order, and the irrational soul is antecedent to the rational soul. In keeping with his conception of the nature of evil, Proclus argues that the evil generated by such a soul (or by the irrational soul in us that is its product) would be only a defect or corruption of the rationality upon which it is dependent. As such, it could not have this soul as its one cause, since its parhupostatic nature requires that its sources be multiple. Among the different doctrines that attribute one cause to evil's existence, that which identifies this cause as an errant World Soul is, according to Proclus, one of a number that look to Plato for corroboration, and it is no doubt this fact that in Proclus' view made it so much the more worthy of condemnation by all right-minded Platonists. For the shortcomings in the thinking of Plutarch, Atticus, and Numenius are first and foremost the outcome of their thorough misreading of Plato on a number of levels. What results is a perversion of Plato's doctrine of evil as mainstream Platonists conceived of it. One of the virtues of these dualistic accounts, however—assuming that one does not accept Proclus' argument that God must be the creator of soul at all of its levels and manifestations—is that, by making the evil World Soul a principle that is completely independent of God as the agent of the Good, they provided a clear explanation for the generation of evil that did not involve the participation of the divine world to which that World Soul is opposed, and so did not embroil the dualists in the sorts of dilemmas that plagued monists in their attempts to explain the problem of evil. The allegiance to a monistic explanation of evil by orthodox Platonists, of course, and especially by the Neoplatonists (whether it be the mitigated monism of

Plotinus or the extreme version found in later Neoplatonists), did not allow such a patent answer as this, but required more intricate and complex exegetical efforts in order to ward off charges of inconsistency in Plato's texts and to account for the existence of evil in a world that is the product of a good God. Indeed, we have seen in detail how Proclus and his Platonist predecessors struggled with these problems, looking principally to Plato's dialogues for the solutions.

CHAPTER SIX

EVIL AS WEAKNESS OF THE HUMAN SOUL

Texts

6.1 [*DMS* c. 23, pp. 201,1 – 202,25] The tribe of souls following these is truly multifarious and diverse and changed by their different choices and impulses; their internal powers, belonging to the soul itself, have been stripped from them, and they "toil greatly" and "limp" (*Phaedrus* 248b3–4), being debilitated and suffering all the evils that souls are said to experience in their descent from above, where for those living within there is a life without unhappiness and felicitous. For each soul when it is above "journeys through the heavens and governs the entire world" (*Phaedrus* 246c1–2), contemplating realities and climbing with the protecting gods to a blessed and most perfect banquet of being, and filling all that look upon it with the nectar that is there. For the primary good is not contemplation, the intellectual life, and prudence, as someone said somewhere, but is the soul that, in accordance with the divine Intellect, possesses the intelligibles through its own intellect, while passing through the sensibles by the powers of Otherness and imparting even to these [*sc.* sensibles] a certain part of the good things above. For the perfect Good does not have its fullness solely in its self-preservation, but both by giving to other things and by not being sparing of its activity it desires to make all things good and like itself. But when a soul, unable to imitate its leaders in following both kinds of life, becomes bereft of the contemplation of reality and is drawn to other secondary powers that revolve around the world, this is for souls the beginning of generation and of "another period" of life (*Republic* 617d7). And both the impotence and privation of contemplation is an evil for them, but, in the context of the All, it is not an evil, but a kind of life different from the first life, inferior due to a defect of power. For where there is the primary Good, there is primary self-sufficiency; and where there is self-sufficiency, there is the greatest power.

6.2 [*DMS* c. 24, pp. 202,1 – 204,37] This, then, is a weakness of the soul, that, wandering from that banquet, it is brought to the lower realm, although it is a manifestation of its power that the soul reaches the higher realm before it falls into the depths. For not all souls have the same type of weakness, just as not all bodies are brought to the furthest degree of sickness by their distance from that virtue that brings them measure and preservation. But if, as he [Plato] says, the soul experiences "a chance connection to the mortal kind that brings death" and, "filled with forgetfulness of being and weighted down, it falls to earth" (*Phaedrus* 248c6–7 and *Republic* 619d7), but conducts itself by means of the All to its appropriate level, although it will change from one form of life to another, until, as it is said in the *Timaeus* (42c4–d2), it turns to the way that leads above, "rejecting the great crowd and its own accretions" and leaving them there, it is "led to being itself and the brightest part of being" (*Republic* 518c9). Then when it descends it will come to the meadow and will gaze upon the souls that are there. But it will come under the throne of Necessity and the plain of forgetfulness, not what it contemplated when it possessed its primordial nature. For the plain of truth and the meadow there had been the objects of contemplation for souls when they were above. But "the nourishment there is the pasture which was fitting for the best part of the soul" (*Phaedrus* 248b7), he said, while what is here below is only opinable, because the stream of forgetfulness is also nearby. And while none of this nourishment is dangerous if the soul drinks moderately, if it fills itself the All leads it to all that is like it, what he calls mindlessness and darkness and, if you will, the most obscure depths of the All, where the many unconquerable evils surround the mortal nature like accretions that form around souls. For the breaking of the cycles, the perversions, the chains, and all that brings death to souls, the periods of a thousand years, the punishments, and, so to speak, the most tragic of the passions that the law of the universe brings over them are in this place. And we shall never escape them nor rest from our travails unless, abandoning all that is foreign, we separate our own good and our contemplation of being from our mortal futility. We must, then, also discard the cloaks that we put on in our descent and without any covering we must proceed above from here. And the eye of our soul by which we contemplate being must be thoroughly purified, and we must allow our intellect to take the place of our senses as governor of our inner life. For that which brings the beginning of evil is our communication and cohabitation with what is worse, and

both forgetfulness and ignorance last as long as we look upon what is not intellectual and dark. Our good, on the other hand, is our flight [from this world] and our assimilation to the divine. For up there is the complete Good and the fount of all good things and pure being, and there is the happy life for all souls that have arrived there…

6.3 [*DMS* c. 33, p. 214,1–29] But if weakness and descent belong to souls, matter is not the cause, because both existed even before there were bodies and matter, and in a certain sense the cause of evil existed in souls before [they descended into] matter. Or how could it happen that, among those souls following Zeus, some are unable to raise the head of their charioteer to that higher place and fall, and, having become dulled to that vision, turn their eyes away? How could "forgetfulness," "misfortune," and the "deviation from course" (*Phaedrus* 248c6–7) belong to them? For the horse that participates in vice "changes course," both striving for earth and brought down by its weight, although there is no matter. Only when it has fallen to earth is there contact with matter and the darkness of earth. But there above, even before the descent, there is this weakness (*debilitas* = *astheneia*), forgetfulness, and evil. For if we had not been weak we would not have left that realm, since, even though far from there, we would have pursued a vision of being. So if weakness exists even before the drink, while being in matter and coming to matter occur after soul's flight from that higher realm, then weakness, and in general the evils experienced by souls, are not caused by matter. And what kind of action could what is incapable of action exert against other things? How again will what is by nature without quality be able to act? Does matter draw souls to itself or do they draw themselves to it and so become separate through their own power and impotence? If they bring themselves to matter, this impulse and appetite for what is worse are their evil, but not matter. For it is true of anything that flight from what is better is evil, and much more so the flight to what is worse. And it is because of their weakness that they suffer what is appropriate to suffer for souls that have chosen evil. But if, on the other hand, they are drawn away by matter, where are soul's self-movement and choices, if we attribute the cause of generation to soul's attractions [to matter] which act as a sort of seduction? Or how will some of those souls generated in matter look toward Intellect and the Good, while others look toward generation and matter, if matter draws all of them to itself, harms them, and exerts its power over them even though they exist in that higher realm?

These are the conclusions that such reasoning draws, compelling us to maintain not only that matter is not evil, but also that it is good, in its use of the mode of contradiction.

6.4 [*DMS* c. 39, pp. 224,1 – 228,55] Because evil is one thing in souls and another in bodies, we must consider the rank of each and whence it begins and the limit of its descent. Is the evil in souls greater than that in bodies, or is the latter the extreme of evils, while the former is a lesser evil? One form of the evil in souls extends only to their activity, while another gains control over them, introducing to some of them different "fractures" of their powers, and to others a "calming," as Plato puts it (*Timaeus* 43a1 and 44b3)…

…To the greater good a greater evil is contrary; that is why the evil in souls is greater than that in bodies, although this is not true of all souls, but only of those whose potency is naturally affected…

…This reveals that corporeal evil is not more troublesome than the wickedness in souls. For the one when it becomes intense ends in not-being, while the other ends in an evil existence. If what we say is true, then, for this reason also the primary evil will not be matter. For the body, which is nearer souls than matter, is filled with less evil. But neither is what is further removed from the Good a greater good nor what participates more in evil a lesser evil; greater evil is in souls, and a lesser evil in bodies, because the ranks of souls and bodies are separate. And those souls that are above are absolutely pure, while for others undertaking evil is a privation of their activity, and others still pursue vice as far as their powers. Of bodies there are some that are always in order, others whose activity and potency undertake different [vices] in different ways, and others whose essence embraces evil. So much, then, on the order of [evil].

6.5 [*DMS* c. 46, p. 238,3–14] …And in the case of the latter [the higher soul], evil and weakness come through itself, since when it descends the mortal form of life originates with it, but it possesses weakness even before it embraces coming-to-be. The fall from above is not due to anything other than to weakness and inability to contemplate. For those of us who are both able and willing to remain in the intelligible realm there is no flight or disorder in the contemplation of being, nor [is it possible] for those who are fully able, but do not want to, not

to see what what is in that higher place. All souls that are apart from the higher realm strive to reach it, while "powerless souls," as Plato says, "are carried around beneath" (*Phaedrus* 248a6–8). All that remains, then, is what pertains to weakness; for the eyes of the soul are unable to maintain their vision of truth itself and the illumination there. So there was evil in souls much earlier and not just from the point of the second life (cf. *Phaedrus* 248c5–8)…

6.6 [*DMS* c. 48, pp. 240,1 – 242,20] These, therefore, are the 'efficient' causes of evils, and of this sort are certain souls and those forms that are associated with matter. For some of these causes lead souls to evil, while others, each opposing the others, provide for what opposes nature a place for its coming-to-be. What for one thing is natural is for another unnatural. If you want an example of this, take that "godless, obscure thing" (176e3–4) that Socrates presents in the *Theaetetus*, the form of evil itself that of necessity "revolves around the mortal nature" (176a8–9). For souls that are assimilated to evil beings exchange assimilation to what is better for this life of evil. Paradigms of what is good the soul sees when it turns toward itself and what is superior to itself, where there are the primarily good things and the highest principles of being situated apart in their "holy seat" (*Phaedrus* 254b7). But when it sees the paradigms of evils [it beholds] what are outside and behind itself, what are individual and external to themselves and what in their natures are disordered, indeterminate, and discordant (cf. *Timaeus* 30a4–5), which have no part in what is good, by which "the eye of the soul" is "nourished," "moistened" (*Phaedrus* 246e2), and lives its proper life. The efficient causes of evils are therefore not reason principles or powers, but impotence, weakness, and the incommensurate connection and mixture of similar elements. Nor again are there paradigms that are motionless and remaining always the same, but they are without limit, indeterminate, and carried in other things that are themselves without limit.

6.7 [*DMS* c. 49, p. 242,1–19] That for the sake of which all things exist must in no way be included among these [causes of evils]. For it would not be proper for the Good to be the end of evils. But since souls that pursue the absolute Good and do all things for the sake of it also do evil, someone perhaps will think that the Good is the end even of evils. So all things exist for the sake of this Good, both things that are good and things that are the opposite. For we do the latter through ignorance

of their nature, while desiring the Good. And perhaps we shall do well to assert that evils are not to be given a principal efficient cause or a paradigm in accordance with their nature or an end in itself. For both the form and nature of evils are a deficiency, an indetermination, and a privation, and the mode of their existence, as has been customary to say, is more like a secondary existence (*parhupostasis*). For this reason it has often been said that evil is also involuntary. For how can it be voluntary when it is done for the sake of the Good, while in itself it is neither desirable nor willed by any being? This topic we shall treat elsewhere. But that what is evil in souls comes about through weakness and the victory of what is inferior—for, Plato says, "the horse that takes part in evil goes off course, drawn by its weight toward earth" (*Phaedrus* 247b3–4)—while the evil in bodies is due to a mixture of dissimilar elements (I mean the mixture of form and what lacks form) and also to a mixture of contrary form-principles, is clear from what we have said.

6.8 [*DMS* c. 58, pp. 256,6 – 258,36] …But perhaps a way will be found to resolve the contradiction. First of all, if the evil in souls [were evil] in itself and unmixed with its contrary, having no part in it in any way, and were absolute opacity and nothing but darkness, perhaps then it would be an obstacle to the works of Providence, from which "all things are good, and nothing base" (*Timaeus* 30a2–3). But if, on the other hand, as we have often said, this evil is good and not unmixed evil or evil in itself, but is evil in a qualified sense, not evil simply, then we must not deny completely its existence because of its share in the Good, nor deny that, because of the wickedness in it, all things, even this evil itself, both are and become good. In general, it is not the same thing to say that God is the cause of all things and that he is the sole cause of all things. The former of these statements is true, but the latter is not. For Intellect is the cause of what comes after it, and soul of what follows upon it, and nature of bodies and of what is in bodies. And each of these principles creates in a different manner: one in a primary and unitary manner, another in an eternal manner, another through self-movement, and another through necessity. Nor is that which creates intellectually identical to what comes before it nor to what follows it insofar as it comes after. So if all things derive from Providence and nothing is evil inasmuch as it comes to be from Providence, how will it be odd that evil has a place among existing things insofar as it comes from soul and what is evil to particulars is at the same time good to wholes. Or, rather, is it not evil for particulars insofar as it derives

from them, but not evil insofar as it derives from wholes? For not only does activity possess the good from Providence, but also the agent. In a certain sense, then, there is good in them, I mean the evils in soul. In this way we have confidence that Providence allows none of these evils to be without share in itself. We must therefore distinguish two kinds of evil, one internal and part of the soul itself, such as improper imagination, consent to evil, or choices that are in some way base, and the other external and in different actions, committed through either anger or desire.

6.9 [*In Tim.* I 376,19 – 381,18] But of these [composite] beings as well some have an external source of motion while others are self-moved; and of those beings that possess self-motion some possess sin already established in their choices, while others fulfill it also through their actions. Some things are therefore completely good wholes, furnishing the good not only for themselves, but also for the composites. Some things that are parts of other things, yet guard their own good, possess the good in a secondary and composite manner. Some things that are parts, but are moved by external causes and gain their existence from other beings, are dependent upon the Providence of those beings and are altered in accordance with need, as all bodies that come to be and perish. For if there must be generation, then there must also be perishing. Generation occurs in accordance with change and is a kind of change. If there is to be perishing, then there must also be a declension that is contrary to nature. Therefore, as that which perishes, perishes with respect to itself, but is not destroyed absolutely—for there [still] exists air, water, or any of those elements into which it has been transformed—so also that which is contrary to nature is for itself disorderly [*atakton*], but in an absolute sense it is ordered. [377] For if, having both perished and been entirely deprived of order, it does not undo the order of the All, how would it, being contrary to nature and not itself divorced from all order, obliterate the entire world order? And in turn, some things that are composites, but self-moved and with activity directed to external objects, produce what comes to be evil for themselves, but in such a way that even this is good and in accordance with God. Since impulses and actions stem from choices, actions follow from choices in accordance with justice whenever the person choosing is worthy not only of the choice, but also of the action that follows upon it. And the action is not good categorically, but [its goodness] justly pertains to the person making a particular choice, while inclined in a

particular way, and it is good for a particular person and a particular life. For among the goods some are good for all beings, while others are good for those things that differ in form [or, through differences in form], and others are good also to things that are indivisible insofar as they are indivisible. For hellebore is not good for all beings; but neither is it good for all bodies, nor even all sick bodies, but rather for the person who has a particular illness and through this source it is healthy. So if an action is immoderate or unjust, it is good for those performing the action insofar as it accords with justice, but is not good categorically for them, but is very great evil, and is evil insofar as [the action] comes from them and affects them, but not evil insofar as it comes from the All and affects them. And in that they have acted against themselves they have consumed their lives becoming evil in their activities, but in that they are creatures of the All, they have paid the penalty for their choices… [378,18] For as the good-resembling choice is its own reward, so wickedness is its own punishment. This, then, is characteristic of the self-moving powers. No evil exists that is not also in some way good, but all things share in Providence. But if some wonder for what reason he has introduced the principle that is an evil-producing cause, even though it is not among the wholes, but is composite, we should say to them that the procession of beings is continuous and no void is left among existing things… [380,2] And if you wish to place it in the context of nature, evil comes to be in itself from the composite soul, but accidentally from God, if in fact one agrees that God brings the soul into existence. But to the extent that it is good, [it is such] in itself from the divine cause, but accidentally from the soul. Thus the Good rightly takes part in coming-to-be… In summary, then, let us say that evil does not exist among the intellective beings. For all of the intellective class is free from evil. Nor [does it exist] in unitary souls or unitary bodies. All wholes are free from evil insofar as they are eternal and always in accordance with nature. What remains, then, is that it exists in composite souls and composite bodies. But even for these it does not exist in their essences. For all of their essences are from God. Nor [does it exist] in their powers. For they are in accordance with nature. Thus what remains [is that exists] in their activities. And as for its existence in souls, it is not in rational souls. [381] For they all desire the Good. Nor is it in irrational souls. For even they act in accordance with nature. But [it exists] in their asymmetry to each other. As for its existence in bodies, it is not in form. For [form] wants to rule over matter. Nor is it in this [matter]. For it [matter]

wishes to be brought to order. But it exists in the asymmetry of form to matter. From this it is also evident that all evil exists as a secondary existence (*kata parhupostasin*), and it exists nevertheless tinged with the Good. So all things are good because of the will of God, and nothing is deprived of good in its power, even if evil in some sense exists. It was not possible that, once generation commenced, even this should not have a secondary existence (*parhuphestanai*), since it is necessary for the completion of the wholes. Concerning evils, then, how they exist and to what sort of Providence from the gods they are subject, these arguments are, for the present, sufficient. More is said concerning them in other works. This at least is clear from what has been said, that the will of God is not in vain. For to God all things are good, and there is nothing among existing things that is not governed by a portion of the Good.

6.10 [*In Tim.* III 313,13 – 314,14] If even the secondary craftsmen have such a nature, then nothing evil or contrary to nature comes from the celestial gods, nor should we distinguish the gods in heaven in this way, as many say we should, nor among the true gods is there one that achieves good and another that is an evil-doer (*kakopoios*), but the mortal life is the cause of its own evils. For neither sickness nor penury nor any other such thing is really evil, but rather the soul's wickedness, licentiousness, cowardice, and, in general, its maliciousness. For we ourselves are responsible for these things. Even if we suffer from them through compulsion of external forces, still ultimately we are responsible. For it is in our power to pursue good and remove ourselves from evils. In accordance with Plato, then, we shall not consider some of the gods to be evil-doers and others benefactors, but all are producers of all of the good that mortals are able to receive, nor do true evils derive from there (*sc.* the divine world), but are only portended, as has been stated earlier (40d): [the movements of the stars] revealing "fearful portents" to those able to see them and to read the writing (*ta grammata*) in the All, how many and what sort of things the shapes of mortals, through their own configurations, write in their movements; and if any of the so-called evils do come from there, [314] such as someone cowardly or licentious from the movement of the heavenly bodies, there is a distinction between those [heavenly] actions and the manner in which souls share in them. Indeed, Plotinus says, the outpouring of Intellect becomes villainy when the one receiving the outpouring does so wickedly, and the gift of an honorable life becomes licentiousness for

the same reason, and in general the gifts of those who are acting beneficently are embraced in an opposite manner by souls here, so that we must not hold responsible for evils those who bestow them since they do so beneficently, but, rather, those who receive them subvert the gifts by their own lack of receptivity [to them]. Even the Zeus portrayed by Homer blames souls for these evils, [saying that] they in vain blame the gods since they themselves cause their own evils. For gods are the producers of good and the suppliers of intellect and life, but of no evil…

6.11 [*In Tim.* III 334,3–27] The divine Iamblichus thus rightly assails those who take this position [*sc.* Plotinus and Theodorus in their theory of the undescended soul]. For what is it in us that sins whenever we pursue an uncontrolled image when aroused by our irrational side? Is it not our choice (*prohairesis*)? And how is it not this choice? For it is through the exercise of this power that we are distinguished from those who are impetuously governed by images. But if choice is sinful, how is the soul sinless? What is it in us that makes our entire life happy? Is it not reason's possession of its proper virtue? We shall entirely agree that it is. But if, whenever that which is best in us is perfect, then we are completely happy, what prevents all of us, all humans, from being happy even now, if our highest faculty always intelligizes and always regards the gods? If this is the intellect, then it is not something that pertains to the soul. But if it is a portion of the soul, then the rest of the soul is also happy. What is the charioteer of the soul? Is it not the most cherished part of us and, as one might say, the supreme part? And how can we avoid asserting this, if this is that power in us that governs our whole essence and by its own head sees the realm above the heavens and is made like the "great leader" of the gods, that which "steers a winged chariot" and is a "first" charioteer who "journeys in the heavens?" (*Phaedrus* 246e) But if the charioteer is the highest part in us, and he, as it is said in *Phaedrus* (248a ff.), is at times borne above and raises his head into the realm beyond, while at other times he sinks and [infects] his soul with lameness and shedding of wings, clearly the result of this is that the highest part in us necessarily is inconstant.

6.12 [*In Remp.* I 105,16–25] The divine principle is not the cause of true evils for souls, but the wicked states of souls are the beginnings for them of discordant (*plêmmelôn*) consequences of their actions. But every action, even if it is discordant as it goes forth into the All, comes about under that authority of the gods and through Providence that is more

universal or more particular. For it happens unjustly to the agent, but justly to the one who is acted upon, as Plotinus says, and as much of it [*sc*. the action] as is without God has its genesis from the particular cause that brings to completion the passional action, while as much as is good finds its proper fulfillment from the gods in authority.

6.13 [*In Remp*. II 89,28 – 90,1] So that the evil pertaining to soul is in itself greater than that pertaining to body; for example, injustice [is a greater evil] than illness. For the latter infects what possesses it with evil without destroying it, while the former both infects with evil and destroys whatever possesses it.

6.14 [*De prov*. c. 57, pp. 165–166 (190–191)] And this common statement is proof: we praise the choices of some and condemn those of others. However, we say that evil is unwilled in all cases, and that evil seems to be good to those who choose it; for no soul knowingly chooses evil, but shuns it. [The soul] desires it due to ignorance, since it possesses by nature a strong love for the Good, but sometimes is unable to see the Good. Since the soul therefore has in its essence an inclination in both directions, I mean toward the Good and toward evil, they have called this its power of choice, because of which we naturally choose one thing in preference to another.

Analysis

Introduction

In his treatise *On the Soul* Iamblichus recounts the dissension among Platonists and others over various aspects of the nature of the soul.[1] One topic of contention involves the source of sinfulness in the soul and Iamblichus divides the philosophers who have weighed in on this issue into two camps. On the one hand there are those, such as Plotinus, Empedocles, Heraclitus, the Gnostics, and Albinus, who hold that

[1] *ap*. Stobaeus I 375,2 ff. Cf. Dillon (1971), 141 and (1993), 157; Alt (1993), 144 f.; Baltes (1975), 250, who notes that for Numenius the external source of soul's evil is matter, a claim with which, *prima facie* at least, Plotinus would agree. Also pertinent is Waszink's (1977), 69, comment that, in Numenius' "confusion" of matter with an evil soul, he, being the "good" Platonist, made matter the dominant element so that he would not be forced to claim that evil derives from the human soul.

the first transgression happens in the divine soul through a certain willful estrangement from the divine world that causes it to descend. According to this group, then, sin arises in the rational soul before its first descent and is part of its nature. Against this position, others have argued that evil is an externally derived accretion to soul. Among the philosophers mentioned by Iamblichus as advancing this argument are Numenius and (often) Cronius, who asserted that evil stems from matter (Iamblichus evidently forgets that Numenius' theory rests on his view that matter is endowed with its own soul), Harpocration, who located the source in bodies themselves, and both Plotinus (again!) and Porphyry, who maintained that the cause is nature (i.e. the vegetative soul) and the irrational life. Leaving aside the question of the accuracy of Iamblichus' doxography, we may say that it highlights the fundamental importance for all schools of Platonism of determining how much, if any, of the soul is to be implicated in the commission of evil acts, and, if sin does in fact reside in the soul, whether it belongs to soul's essence or has an external source and whether it is the irrational soul (or some aspect of the irrational soul) or the rational soul that is responsible. It will become clear in what follows that Proclus essentially belongs to the first of the groups described by Iamblichus and that he believes strongly, with justification despite what Iamblichus asserts, that Plotinus does not.

Proclus

The problems associated with claiming that soul's propensity to sin is internal to it were particularly acute for those like Proclus who accepted as an axiom of Platonism that no one sins willingly and that all sinfulness is the result of ignorance, but at the same time found evidence in the dialogues for the claim that evil is present in soul before its descent. This ambivalence on the part of Proclus results in what may seem to be incompatible claims in *DMS* that, on the one hand, soul's *malitia* is a weakness (*debilitas* = *astheneia*) from which the rational soul suffers before it descends into the material world and, on the other, that this weakness extends only as far as soul's activity and does not affect its essence.[2] He would thus belong within the first group described by Iamblichus, but his membership is qualified. His

[2] At *In Remp*. I 33,27 f. Proclus defines weakness as a "hulic passion" (*astheneia pathos ousa hulikon*) that is "far from the gods" (*porrhô tôn theôn*). Cf. also *De prov*. cc. 24 and 26.

position as he outlines it in his treatise is, as will become clear shortly, most likely directed against that of Plotinus, who very definitely (despite Iamblichus' apparent confusion on the matter) is to be included within the second of Iamblichus' groups, although again with qualification. The two are in agreement that soul's sinfulness is a kind of weakness; the dispute arises over what, if any, role matter plays in 'exploiting' this weakness and thus in acting as at least an auxiliary cause of soul's descent.

The schematization of the different kinds of evil that Proclus presents in *DMS* cc. 39 [6.4] and 55–57 is particularly interesting for the way in which he draws a rather sharp division between the evils of the rational and irrational souls, respectively. There are, he explains, three "subjects" of evil, the individual soul, the "image of soul" (a term that he has employed earlier, and consistently employs elsewhere, to represent the irrational soul), and the individual body. "Individual" is here is a word that carries special importance, the implication being that evil exists only at the level of particulars, not of "wholes." So the rational and irrational souls have their own good and evil, each kind of soul being appropriate to its different stratum of existence, just as the good and evil of the soul in general are to be seen over against the good and evil of the body. Because the specific good of each of these souls is an existence that is in accordance with the level of being directly above it—intellect for the rational soul and reason for the irrational soul—, it follows that their particular evils will be what oppose these levels. We noted earlier that the evil proper to the rational soul, which occurs when it turns its contemplation away from Intellect toward what is below it, is a form of baseness (*turpitudo*), while that of the irrational soul is termed a sickness (*egritudo*). In both cases the opposition to their individual goods is a kind of weakness and loss of both power and "symmetry."[3] Furthermore, we must draw distinctions in the extent to which evil may conceivably affect each soul, for it is greater or lesser depending on whether it extends to soul's activities exclusively, to its activities as well as its powers, or to its very nature (c. 39 [6.4]). Only evils that could reach soul's nature are truly such, since they affect its very being. But such absolute evils are only hypothetical, for all of what are commonly regarded as the evils of the soul are, "in the context of the All," not really evils at all (*DMS* c. 23 [6.1]). Proclus as much as any

[3] Cf. *DMS* c. 23 [6.1].

Platonist embraces the fundamental truth that no soul is essentially evil. Not even the primal World Soul of Plutarch and Atticus is absolutely evil. As with all irrational souls, their World Soul is an "image of soul," which means that, as with any other form of irrational soul, its moral value is measured more or less against the model of the perfect soul; to be perfectly evil it would have to be the contrary of that perfect soul (*DMS* cc. 25 and 45). All irrational and rational souls are parts of an "antecedent" soul, the latter determining the former as basically good, but capable of coming closer or pulling further away from perfect goodness in its activities.

Proclus somewhat misleadingly locates the beginning of soul's weakness in its descent into matter (*DMS* cc. 23 [6.1] and 31) or, as he puts it in *DMS* c. 20, at the point at which it comes into contact with "mortal nature." The descent is an event that affects different souls differently, determining which, if any, of the soul's activities, powers, or nature is diminished. Yet we must not conclude from this fact that matter itself is responsible for soul's evil. In the first place, if matter is indeed the source of evil, then we will be forced to accept one or the other of two impossible positions: if matter is not itself a separate principle, but derives from the Good (as is, in fact, the case in Proclus' metaphysics), then the Good is ultimately the cause of evil; if, on the other hand, matter is an independent principle, then we have, as in Plutarch, Atticus, and Numenius, opposing first principles, one absolutely good and the other absolutely evil (*DMS* c. 31). Beyond this, however, Plato makes clear in *Phaedrus* that the root of evil existed in undescended souls before the creation of matter and bodies (*DMS* cc. 33 [6.3] and 46 [6.5]).[4] So the weakness that soul displays in its activities while in contact with body is really prefigured in its life before descent into the physical world. The cause of this weakness of soul in its pre-embodied state Proclus does not here specify, although there are hints that it has to do with the myth in *Phaedrus*, where Proclus finds testimony for the possibility of soul's contemplative 'descent' from the intellective sphere before its actual descent into embodiment, this earlier 'descent' being, moreover, a matter of choice.[5]

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[4] On the importance of *Phaedrus* for the question of evil in the soul, cf. Festugière (1983), 78ff.; Dörrie (1965), 178; Sheppard (2000).

[5] Cf. *DMS* c. 49 [6.7]. There Proclus only briefly takes up the general question of whether or not sin is voluntary, and then without providing an answer, although he does admit that, for many Platonists who accept that all beings act for the sake of the Good, the response is that sin is involuntary. On this question, cf. Theiler (1966), 188ff.

Plotinus

In chapter 33 [6.3] of *DMS*, where he is clearly thinking of Plotinus (the chapter is part of a sizable chunk of the treatise devoted to a refutation of Plotinus' claim that matter is absolute evil), Proclus presents an interpretation of the descent passage of *Phaedrus* that is fundamentally at odds with what we find in the *Enneads*.[6] Here Proclus demonstrates that, according to everything that Plato says there—one of the horses strives to pull the chariot downwards in advance of its actual descent—, soul possessed its weakness before its contact with matter.[7] The passage is reminiscent of Iamblichus' refutation of Plotinus' and Theodorus' doctrine of the undescended soul outlined by Proclus in his commentary on *Timaeus*,[8] where the same *Phaedrus* text is invoked to prove that no part of the soul is sinless. If Proclus is indeed here reacting specifically to Plotinus' doctrine, as I shall presently suggest is the case, then there is the implied criticism that Plotinus is much too selective in his reading of Plato, concentrating exclusively on those souls that continue to follow Zeus and maintain their upward vision. The very fact that some souls deviate from this course is proof that, in Plato's view, they, at least, already possess evil.[9] Plato thereby indisputably shows that matter cannot be the cause of soul's weakness; rather, it must be intrinsic to soul. Thus matter is not primary evil.

In his critique Proclus invokes Plutarch's question as one central to his theory of evil, arising inevitably out of this debate over the exegesis of *Phaedrus*: How can matter, which is completely without quality and so completely unable to act, be said to be the cause of anything? In asking this he may well have been thinking of Plotinus' description at the

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[6] Cf. also *DMS* c. 49 [6.7]. On the *Phaedrus* passage as something of a *locus classicus* for arguments concerning soul's responsibility for its own sinfulness, see Plutarch *De an. procr.* 1026F, p. 165,6–24 and Iamblichus *ap.* Proclus *In Tim.* III 334,4ff. Cf. Hager (1962), 98f., who notes that Proclus is here, as elsewhere in the treatise, forgetting the Platonic dictum, to which he himself subscribed, that our sinfulness is not intentional, but comes from ignorance. See also Opsomer and Steel (1999[2]), 257f. On Plutarch's orthodox stance, cf. Thévenaz (1938), 119f.

[7] Cf. also. *Th. Pl.* I 18,85ff.: the *parhupostasis* of evils comes not from power, but from the weakness (*astheneia*) of beings that receive the illumination of the gods; cf. 86,15f. and *In Tim.* I 380,24ff.

[8] *In Tim.* III 334,3–27 [6.11]. On this passage and the question whether or not the descent of the soul is for Plotinus an act of deliberation (*prohairesis*), see Rist (1975) and O'Brien (1993), 5ff.

[9] And Proclus might even have construed this as Plato's repudiation of the possibility of an undescended soul.

end of *Enneads* I.8.14 of how soul gains its weakness from matter—how matter "begs" and seemingly tempts soul to come down to it.[10] Proclus refers to this notion as matter's "seduction" of soul and is appropriately wary of it. For, as he amply argues, if matter does exert a kind of attraction upon soul, then there are two possible views of soul's own role in its descent: either, despite this attraction, it descends through its own "power and impotence," in which case its descent is a matter of deliberate choice rising from its intrinsic weakness, or soul succumbs to the blandishments of matter and is drawn down to the physical world, in which case we would be forced to admit that soul possesses neither self-movement nor free choice; that is, the Platonic soul would cease to be what it is.[11] Moreover, by implication, matter would gain a power that it should not properly have.

The particular aspects of Plotinus' theory of evil against which Proclus is directing his argument in *DMS* c. 33 [6.3] can be seen from Plotinus' description of the "evil" soul in his own treatise on evil (I.8).

> Soul is not in itself evil nor is it entirely evil. But what is the evil soul? It is as he [Plato] says, "those who are enslaved to that part in which the soul's sinfulness naturally arises," which is to say, the irrational form of soul that accepts evil, such as lack of measure, excess, and deficiency, from which come licentiousness, cowardice, and the rest of soul's sinfulness… [I.8.4.6–11]

Plotinus locates soul's evil in the irrational soul, identifying it with Plato's reference in *Phaedrus* to the part of the soul in which evil naturally occurs (256b2–3). Yet Plotinus emphasizes that this is the part of the soul that "receives" evil from its association with matter, to which, to be sure, it is "inclined." One wonders immediately how much of soul's inclination toward matter is due to the admixture of matter itself and how much to soul's natural receptivity to evil. What is clear, and most important for Plotinus' theory, perhaps in part because it separates him from the dualistic Platonism of Plutarch and Atticus, is his commitment to the postulate that evil is an external addition to soul, as it is to body.[12]

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[10] This chapter is part of a sizable chunk of the treatise devoted to a refutation of the doctrine that matter is absolute evil. On Proclus' argument here and his interpretation of soul's weakness, cf. Opsomer and Steel (1999[2]), 244ff. and 257f.

[11] Proclus most fully discusses his concept of *prohairesis* and the punishment of souls for their wrong choices in *In dec. dub. passim*, especially cc. 34–39.

[12] O'Meara (1999), 116, describes the irrational soul's inclination toward matter/evil, through which it becomes evil, as an "intermediary" deficiency that Plotinus ranks

This postulate is the subject of extended analysis in the latter half of Plotinus' treatise, much of which is taken up with his concern to confront the rich tradition of debate regarding soul's relationship to evil. Plotinus' principal opposition in this debate comes from two doctrines, each of which he treats in some detail. Both doctrines appropriate as their own the Stoic *aporia* with which Platonists well before the time of Plotinus were forced to deal: if matter possesses no qualities, how can it be evil?[13] And if matter is not evil, then the evil in soul must be primary and part of its nature, not something accidental to it. The first theory, according to which evil is privation, or merely the absence of good in the soul, Plotinus addresses in I.8.11.[14] The second theory Plotinus treats at length in I.8.14.

> If someone says that sin is a weakness (*astheneian*) of soul…then it would be worthwhile to find out what this weakness is for the soul and whence it comes… By necessity such weakness in soul is either in those that are completely separate from matter or in those that are in matter or in both. If it is not in souls that are separate from matter—for all such souls are pure and, as he [Plato] says, "winged and perfect" [*Phaedrus* 246b7–C1] and there is no obstacle to their activity—then what remains is that weakness is in those souls that have fallen, those that are not pure nor have been purified, and their weakness would not consist in the removal of something, but is the presence of something external (*allotriou parousia*), such as phlegm or bile in the body. If we grasp the cause of soul's fall more clearly…then the object of our search, the weakness of soul, will be evident… Thus matter, laying itself out beneath soul, is illumined by it, but cannot grasp the source of the illumination… It obscured the illumination and the light from there [above] by its mixture with it and made [the light] weak by offering it generation and the reason for coming into it. For it would not have come to what was not present. This is the fall of the soul, its coming into matter and becoming weak … So matter is cause of soul's weakness and the cause of its sinfulness. It is thus itself evil before [its contact with soul] and is primary evil … For soul would not have come into it [matter] if it had not begun generation because of its [matter's] presence…Thus matter is responsible

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between the deficiency of the hypostases Intellect and soul in their relationship with the Good (in which there is no evil) and the absolute deficiency of matter. See also (1997) for his study of Plotinus' theory and Proclus' reaction to it, especially with regard to the distinction he draws between metaphysical and moral evil. Cf. as well De Vogel (1986), 134.

[13] Cf. I.8.10.1: *apoios de ousa pôs kakê*;

[14] According to his argument there, if evil is the privation of good in the soul, then soul will contain no good, and thus no life, in which case soul will be soulless. The concept of a soul that is evil by nature is, of course, anathema to all Neoplatonists.

> for weakness in soul and responsible for its wickedness. Therefore before [soul's descent] it is evil itself and primary evil. For even if soul itself had generated matter through an affectation, and if it had [then] come into contact with it and thereby become evil, matter would still have been the cause through its presence. For soul would not have come into it if it had not taken hold of generation by virtue of matter's presence. [1–55]

As does Proclus, proponents of this theory contend that evil in the soul is a weakness (*astheneia*), examples of which Plotinus cites as various states that exhibit a lack of moral and emotional steadfastness. We must ascertain the cause of this weakness, which, he states, may or may not be the same as what brings about weakness in the body, i.e. matter. At this point the basic conflict between Plotinus' and Proclus' interpretations, both of the theory and of Plato's *Phaedrus*, becomes manifest. Psychic weakness, Plotinus continues, occurs only in souls that have come into contact with matter, the higher, undescended soul remaining pure and unhampered by the constraints of activity in the physical world. At this point Plotinus quotes from *Phaedrus* as corroboration for his notion that weakness is a phenomenon limited to souls that have already descended and is itself a byproduct of the descent. Weakness arises in soul as an accretion only *after* its descent. Its presence in the soul will not be a removal of something it already possesses; it is, rather, the presence of something different from soul, just as the body takes in phlegm or bile. This foreign addition is, of course, matter with which the descended soul comes into contact while remaining essentially separate from it. There can be only one source of evil, whether we are talking about corporeal evil or the sinfulness of the soul. Even if soul had itself created matter, its weakness would still be a corruption arising from its subsequent contact with its creation; there would be no evil attending the creation itself, which we would then necessarily attribute to soul before its descent.[15]

In an earlier treatise, in a much different context, Plotinus had advanced the same argument, that soul is not directly responsible for the weakness that results from its contact with an already existing mat-

[15] O'Meara (1999), 153f., provides some historical background for the concept of soul's evil as weakness. See also Schröder (1916), 141ff.; Hager (1987), 154f.; O'Meara (1996), 83ff.; Corrigan (1996), 227ff. It will be clear from my paraphrase of the conditional in I.8.14.51–53 that I do not agree with O'Brien's assessment that the protasis expresses a real situation. The precise nature of this conditional, whether it is "irreal" (i.e. contrary-to-fact), as Schwyzer argued, or not, as O'Brien argued, is critical to the debate over whether or not, for Plotinus, soul creates matter. Cf. O'Brien (1993), 64ff.

ter after its descent. In II.9.10 he outlines a Gnostic myth of creation (perhaps Valentinian) and then proceeds to ridicule it by pointing up its many incongruities. The myth tells of the descent of soul to illuminate a pre-existing darkness (matter or something like it), which results in the production of certain images of soul in matter. Presumably all of this is done at the behest of a higher being who himself does not descend. Among other concerns that Plotinus voices in his critique is the question of why soul would descend in the first place. I want to focus on the criticisms presented in chapter 12 of that treatise, which establish two important truths regarding the role of the soul in the generation of the universe.

> The illumination of the darkness, when examined, will force them [*sc*. the Gnostics] to agree to the true causes of the cosmos. Why was there need for soul to illuminate, unless the need was universal? The necessity was either according to soul's nature or against it. If it was according to its nature, then it was always so. But if it was against its nature, then what is contrary to nature will occupy the higher world, and evil will exist before this universe, and the universe will not be responsible for evil, but the higher world will be the cause of the evil here, and evil will not come to soul from this world, but to this world from soul (*kai têi psukhêi ouk enteuthen, alla par' autês entautha*). And the argument will proceed by attributing the universe to the first principles. And if the universe, then matter, from which it appears, as well. For, they say, the soul when it inclines [in descent] saw the darkness that already existed and illuminated it. What, then, is the source of this darkness? If they will say that soul created it after it inclined, then there would have been nowhere for it to incline to, nor would the darkness be the cause of its inclination, but rather the very nature of soul. This is the same as attributing the cause to the preceding necessities; so the responsibility belongs to the first principles. [31–44]

First, soul's descent to illuminate the darkness that is matter, which both Plotinus and these Gnostics agree is necessary, although for very different reasons, must be in accordance with its nature, for if they say that it is not, then they will be forced to admit that evil originates in (or is co-eternal with or is perhaps caused by) the intelligible world and is then introduced into the universe by soul in its descent. Secondly, the ultimate responsibility for all of creation, including matter if indeed it is created, resides in what he calls here the "first principles," not in some inferior creator who himself is the product of higher creative forces. Expression of the second tenet is no doubt intended to counter the Gnostic dualism according to which the world is the product of a lesser, evil god, but it serves as well to contradict the major dualistic systems of Platonism insofar as one of the possible interpretations of

the Gnostic myth outlined here, i.e. that soul's descent opposes its own (good) nature, results in a cosmic condition that is in its general contours equivalent to what is found in Plutarch and Numenius: evil is introduced into matter from the outside during the process of creation, and the ungenerated, pre-cosmic soul is directly to blame.[16] In each of these dualistic systems evil in whatever its manifestation is a divine and eternal principle. Hence we begin to see the foundation for Plotinus' interpretation of the *Phaedrus* passage in I.8.14: a proper reading of Plato requires us to deny that soul descends because of some weakness inherent to it, that is to say, some weakness that makes it act against its nature, and this denial allows us to escape the same untenable dualism that he here ascribes to the Gnostics.

That evil does not come into existence *ex nihilo* at the moment of cosmic creation Plotinus takes to be an undeniable truth. He does not seem to have found in Gnostic doctrine a clear explanation for the origin of evil, but implicitly accepts as incontrovertible that if they want to maintain that evil exists outside the reach of their first God, then they must admit that its source is itself a divine principle. Plotinus recognizes that the problem of evil centers for the Gnostics on the question of the nature of their pre-existing darkness or matter. He gives only the briefest consideration to the possibility that it is an independent, eternal principle of evil. The only hint that he entertains this possibility comes near the beginning of the treatise (.3.18–21), where he summarily dismisses the view that matter might exist "alone," that is, apart from the intelligible principles, for then these principles would be limited in the range of their ordering powers to particular parts of the universe. Matter must therefore be eternally illuminated by them, which is to say that it does not exist independently of the Good.

The other explanation that Plotinus puts forward is that cosmic evil is the result of some moral shortcoming on the part of the descending soul (II.9.4.3–4). He comes back to this possibility in the chapter quoted above (ll. 38–44): If the Gnostic response to the question regarding the origin of the darkness is that soul generated it when it descended, then they are forced to conclude that, since soul had no external reason for descent (matter not yet existing), matter cannot be responsible for it; soul's fall can only be due to its own nature.[17] Now this argument at

[16] Although for the Gnostics this soul is not primarily responsible, there is no evidence here at least of a Gnostic appeal to Plato's evil World Soul of *Laws* 896a.

[17] The importance of this point for Plotinus' argument and its relationship to his

least appears to be in direct contradiction to two claims that Plotinus makes in his later treatise on evil and elsewhere, first, that soul would not descend if matter did not already exist as the 'object' of its fall, and secondly that even if it were possible that soul created matter, the responsibility for the descent and creation of evil would still be matter's alone. But there is a way to reconcile the apparent discrepancy. In his formulation of the conditional in I.8.14.51–54, Plotinus offers a compound protasis: even if soul itself created matter *and if it became evil by its contact with it*, matter would be the cause by its presence. Here, in the context of his own theory, he does not envision the possibility that soul's evil is antecedent to its generation of matter, as he does in II.9. And he does not because it is axiomatic in I.8 that soul's fall is not exclusively the result of some weakness in its nature, for, again, soul would not descend if matter were not already present. If we are to consider the possibility that soul generates matter, then we must distinguish that act from a second act of soul's coming into contact with a (now) existing matter. The first act, that of the generation of matter, could not, then, be part of soul's descent in the sense that Plotinus conceives it, i.e. as the soul coming into the presence of matter; nor, as O'Brien has pointed out, would it be a sinful act. The second act, on the other hand, is both soul's descent and its first encounter with evil. The possibility that Plotinus presents to the Gnostics in II.9.12, however, is something quite different. Here, in hypothesizing how the Gnostics could account for the origin of matter, he explicitly makes soul's production of matter part of its descent (or an occurrence after its descent), thus collapsing into one act what in his own theory are conceptually separate events. In making such a claim, then, the Gnostics would be violating the strict rule that he establishes elsewhere, that the soul would not decline if matter did not already exist. Hence the cause of the soul's weakness is no longer matter, but its own nature. This is one aspect of his critique of the Gnostic myth that has been overlooked by commentators: if, as the Gnostics may be forced to admit, the soul's descent and creation of matter is the result of some weakness in its nature—that is, if it is something contrary to its natural goodness—, then the entire intelligible world is ultimately implicated in the generation of evil.

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reasoning in I.8.14 have been overlooked by O'Brien. See especially his analysis (1993), 19ff. and 82ff.

Yet the weakness of soul must play some role in its descent, although Plotinus provides no concise explanation for what that role might be. In fact, the same question arises when we consider Proclus' theory of evil, for he as well offers no clear accounting for how exactly soul's weakness determines its fall.

The Seduction of the Soul

If the descent of souls into matter is not due to their inherent weakness, and if we are to take out of account such other explanations as that they descend in order to fulfill some duty imposed upon them by their divine source or simply from a necessity dictated by their nature, then we must look to matter as somehow capable of enticing souls to come down to it.[18] This is the explanation that Proclus poses toward the end of *DMS* c. 33, only to reject it as in effect a denial of soul's moral autonomy. He is referring to the idea expressed in the metaphor of the seduction of soul, sometimes called the intoxication of soul, an image taken from *Phaedo* (79c6–8). We again have some reason to believe that Proclus is thinking specifically of Plotinus, although the metaphor was quite popular in the post-classical schools. Many Platonists, although insisting that matter possessed no qualities, felt compelled, under the influence of Plato's *Timaeus*, to claim nonetheless that it fulfilled some sort of active function in the creation of the world. A representative example of the use of the metaphor is found in Numenius, who refers to his second God, whom he regards as equivalent to the World Soul, as both active and passive with relation to matter, both unifying matter while being divided by it insofar as matter possesses desirable qualities.[19] The World Soul's gaze upon matter, which Numenius seems to have described as a kind of preoccupation with matter, separates her both from the intelligible world and from herself, so that Soul forgets herself. Matter thus exerts a kind of attraction over the divine Soul through which Soul is lured toward the visible cosmos where the two coexist, although, unlike bodies that cannot exist apart from matter, Soul may free herself at any time she chooses to redirect her vision toward the divine realm. This characteristically dualistic view of the relationship between Soul and matter in Numenius' thought is repeated by Calcid-

[18] For this concept see Schröder (1916), 177ff. and Dörrie (1965), 180f.
[19] Frg. 11, p. 53, 1–20 = Eusebius *Pr. ev.*, XI, 17,11 – 18,5.

ius in his commentary on Plato's *Timaeus* (c. 297–298 and cf. c. 300), where he asserts Pythagoras' belief that matter, or more precisely the soul of matter, has substance and so willfully resists Providence (even after order is imposed, some residue of resistance to Good remains insofar as the chaos of matter is not fully eliminated).[20] But then at the same time, here and in other Numenian passages in Calcidius matter is said to submit willingly to the ordering power of God as passive recipient of God's active ordering.[21] Numenius' position should perhaps be seen as a response to Plutarch's claim that Plato's Necessity cannot be material insofar as Necessity actively opposes God while matter cannot be an agent of any sort (*De an. procr.* 1015AB). And this in turn is Plutarch's rejection of the Stoic doctrine of creation according to which there are two first principles, God and matter, for to Plutarch's as well as to Numenius' minds Stoic matter, being *apoios* (without quality) and so neither good nor evil, cannot be a first principle set over against God.[22] The same ambivalence regarding matter's participation in the generation of the world, which some regard as characteristic of Middle Platonist exegesis of Plato,[23] manifests itself in the differing interpretations of the description of how God brings order from chaos in *Timaeus* 52d ff. Plato's statement there that the Nurse of Becoming, or matter, is shaken by the forms and in turn shakes them as she is moved, received varying commentary. There are the extreme points of view, the one, from those taking a purely Aristotelian position on matter, holding that matter remains totally passive and that the disordered motion is provided exclusively by the introduction of the elements, and the other from the dualists, principally Numenius, asserting that matter (or matter *cum* soul) possesses the chaotic movement. And thirdly, there are those Platonists who, following Plato closely, take a middle ground, according to which there is a reciprocity of forces at work in the joining of matter and the traces of the elements: matter, being without qualities, cannot be the source of its own motion; motion comes to matter externally, through its mixture with the traces, although the disorder of the motion is occasioned by matter itself, through its inherent instability and lack of form. This last interpretation comes in several

[20] An idea repeated by Porphyry in *De antro nymph.* 5, p. 59 Nauck.

[21] *In Tim.* cc. 268–270, cf. c. 319,1–4; cf. Waszink (1955), 133.

[22] On Numenius' opposition to the Stoics: Calcidius, *In Tim.* c. 297; cf. Sextus Empiricus, *Adv. math.* 9,10.

[23] Cf. Den Boeft (1970), 86f.; Van Winden (1959), 233–242.

permutations. We may compare, for example, the statements of Alcinous with that of the Middle Platonist source in Calcidius' commentary on *Timaeus*.

> He created it, then, out of the totality of matter. This, as it moved without order and randomly, prior to the generation of the heavens, he took in hand and brought from disorder into the best order, adorning its parts with suitable numbers and shapes, with the result that he distinguished off fire and earth so as to have their present relationship to air and water, whereas they previously possessed only traces and the mere capacity of receiving the potency of the elements, and agitated irrationally and immoderately that matter by which they were themselves in turn agitated … [Alcinous, *Didask.* 12.2]

> Matter, then, being imprinted with these traces (of Forms), moved first of all in a disorderly manner, but was then brought by God to order, through all things being harmonized with each other by means of proportion. However, these (elements) do not remain spatially separated, but experience an unceasing agitation, and communicate this to matter, because, as they are compressed and thrust together by the rotation of the world, and are driven against each other, the finer particles are carried into the interstices of the more coarse-grained ones. For this reason no space is left empty of body, and this persisting unevenness produces the agitation; for matter is shaken about by these, and these in turn by it. [*Didask.* 13.3][24]

> And before the introduction of qualities [matter] was, I think, neither at rest or in motion, yet possessed a certain natural predisposition to embrace motion and rest. After the introduction of qualities, embellished and made a perfect body by God, it took on the attributes of motion and rest such that it might manifest them at different times. So, in his [*sc.* Plato's] desire to establish the cause of its motion, he says that "the motion of matter originated in the shaking of the bodies imposed upon it and by their preponderance as they veered this way and that, but was unstable and like a flowing," since the impotency of matter, pushed down or raised at different times and in different directions, moved variously and its uneven and chaotic motion fluctuated due to its unlimited capacity. As a result most believed that this disorderly motion is an agitation that is inherent to matter, proper to it, and proceeding from its nature, while in fact it is an external blow, and they therefore thought that it was animated and participated in life. Thus the motion that came to be in it was external to it, but the discordance and disorderliness of the motion happened in accordance with the nature of matter, which offered an unstable and unsteady foundation since "it was endowed neither with

[24] Translations from *Alcinous: The Handbook of Platonism* by John Dillon. By permission of Oxford University Press.

> equal forces nor even powers, nor was there any balance in it" that could control the vacillation and preponderance of the bodies. But, just as in still water, the surface of which is motionless, motion first arises when something of greater weight falls into it, then, when there occurs an agitation of the entire element, not only is the mass of water moved, but in turn it moves the very thing that has fallen into it and constituted the cause of the motion, so as well matter not only is itself moved in many ways through the motion initially produced by the bodies, but it in turn provides impulse to the very bodies that are the beginning of the motion. [Calcidius, *In Tim.* c. 352]

The influence of this tradition of exegesis on the *Enneads* is unambiguous.[25] The dualists' claim that matter is some sort of power that resists the beneficent work of divine Providence is a favorite target for Plotinus' polemic. Matter is absolute evil, but it is at the same time absolute deficiency, a mere "decorated corpse" that always remains unchanged whenever form is present in it, but never alive or thinking (II.4.5.15). But he does occasionally speak of matter as if it possessed a will of its own, although it is almost always the Peripatetic expression of matter's "desire" for form or the Good,[26] and he more than once makes it clear that he is employing a metaphor. Perhaps his most emphatic statement in this regard comes in a late treatise (VI.7.28) where he asks an intriguing question: If matter had a will, would it wish to become form exclusively (i.e. exclusive of its own nature as matter)? His answer is twofold. First of all, we must not take literally any language that imputes desire to matter. Plotinus here admits that he himself had earlier done just that (at .25.25ff. he had stated that matter, if it gained the power of perception, would be happy to receive form), but in this later chapter re-certifies his position that any argument that grants perception to matter is purely hypothetical. Moreover, even if such attribution were possible, it would be self-contradictory to suppose that matter, if it is absolute evil, could will to become form, for, since form is good, matter would be wishing to cease to be what it is. Still, the image is compelling for Plotinus, and he allows himself a brief digression: If matter could regard itself in self-reflection, as in a mirror, how could it possibly like what it sees? How could evil be satisfied with itself and not will its own destruction in pursuit of the Good? So much for the concept of matter

[25] We have already seen Plotinus' similar interpretation of this part of *Timaeus* in I.8.4.1–6.

[26] Cf. III.6.11.32 and 14.9f.; VI.7.25.25; also note the very interesting comment at II.4.3.8 that soul seeks form as the "matter" of Intellect.

as a first principle that either is fully brought to order in its complete submission to the Good or remains in active defiance of God and his Providence.

Yet in I.8.14 Plotinus comes close to depicting matter as a seductive power in something other than a purely figurative sense. As well, there are a number of passages where he describes what I would characterize as a certain predisposition on the part of the descending soul to succumb to the attraction of matter. A number of these passages contain apparently conflicting statements regarding the cause or causes of soul's descent into the physical world, a subject much discussed in Plotinian studies. We discover what look to be competing statements, on the one hand that soul is sent into this world by God to create, establish order, and preserve what it has generated (IV.8.1–3), and on the other that descent is a matter of soul's willful separation from the intelligible world in an act of self-assertion (V.1.1.1 ff.; IV.7.13.1 ff.).[27] Related to these are the incongruous claims that descent is an inclination (*neusis*) of the soul (I.1.12.22 f.; I.8.4.20) and that it is not (II.9.4); that, on the one hand, this inclination is a spontaneous urge and not a matter of deliberate choice (IV.3.3.13; IV.8.5.27)[28] and, on the other, that it is the result of reflection (V.1.5.1 ff.). It will be worthwhile here to contrast specifically Plotinus' commentary on *Phaedrus* 246c in IV.8.4 (*On the Descent of the Soul into Bodies*) with what we have seen in I.8.14. In the former passage the "molting" of soul's wings is due to a voluntary act of separation from the intelligible arising out of a power (*dunamis*) directed toward the world below, and it is specifically said to be the cause of soul's descent (l. 37); no mention is made of the determinative role that, according to I.8, matter is supposed to play in this process. And we should note that in this early treatise Plotinus distinguishes between two kinds of sin, one related to the cause of descent and the other to the evil that soul accomplishes after it descends (IV.8.5.17 ff.). This statement would seem to bring him into agreement with a number of earlier Platonists (Numenius, Cronius, and Harpocration) who claimed that there is evil in the descent itself, quite apart from what happens after soul descends, which is where Plotinus limits soul's evil in I.8.[29]

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[27] Although in the latter passage soul in its separation is inspired by the beauty and order of Intellect.

[28] IV.8.5 argues that there is no conflict in these two explanations, for both are true.

[29] Cf. also Porphyry, *De abstin.* IV 20, p. 263,17 ff. Nauck and see Hager (1962), 84.

Such is the inconsistency in Plotinus' treatment of the source of evil, an inconsistency that was noted as early as Iamblichus, who, as we have seen, in his treatise *On the Soul* has Plotinus endorsing two opposing theories concerning soul's responsibility for evil, including him both among those philosophers who grounded evil in some fault in the rational soul itself that causes it to descend (due to soul's "first otherness" or "differentiation")[30] and among those who associated evil with causes external to the rational soul, to external "accretions," which is the argument of I.8.4 (due to nature and the irrational life).[31] We might look at Plotinus' problem, if indeed it is a problem, as one that is unavoidable for any commentator on Plato. Plotinus admits that Plato himself gives various reasons for soul's descent (IV.8.3.6f.), although in the same breath he clarifies that there is no inconsistency in these differing accounts.[32] And Plotinus is by no means the only Platonist who betrayed ambivalence when it came to the soul's participation in the generation of evil. Sources tell us that Numenius purported both that evil is an external accretion to soul[33] and that soul can be infected with moral perversity before its embodiment[34] And Porphyry maintained a number of conflicting positions regarding the source of evil during his career.[35]

Still, it is the more positive reading of *Phaedrus* that in the end held sway in Plotinus' mind, so that we see him arguing forcefully in I.8 and elsewhere that the higher soul is completely free from sin;[36] that sin is an addition to soul that takes place after it descent;[37] that

[30] Cf. V.1.1.

[31] See note 1. The same sort of self-contradiction might be attributed to Numenius (Iamblichus says that for Numenius, Cronius, and Harpocration, descent of soul is always evil: 380,16ff.).

[32] Cf. IV.8.5, where he argues for this in detail.

[33] Iamblichus, *De anima ap.* Stobaeus I 375,12–18 = frg. 43 and cf. Calcidius, *In Tim.* c. 298. See also Frede (1987), 1073f., who concludes from Iamblichus' comment that in the doctrine of Numenius both astral and sublunar matter are evil.

[34] Aeneas Gazaeus, *Theophrastus*, p. 12 Boissonade = frg. 49; on this frg. cf. *Laws* 641c5; *Phaedo* 66c3 and 67a4. There is also the ambiguity of where the responsibility for the descent of his second God into matter lies. At first he appears to attribute the descent to matter's "desirable nature" and instability, only then to lay the blame on this God for his turning away from himself and toward matter, thus "forgetting" himself. Cf. Eusebius, *Pr. ev.*, XI, p. 537b Viger = frg. 11, p. 53,13–20.

[35] Matter is the ground of evil: *Sent.* 30 and cf. 37; *De abstin.* I 30; cf. *De antro nymph.* 5, p. 59: matter opposes Providence; but matter is absolute not-being: *Sent.* 20; soul is cause: *Ad Marc.* 29 and cf. *Sent.* 32. Cf. Hager (1962), 93 on his inconsistency.

[36] I.1.9–12 and VI.2.22.30ff.

[37] Cf. II.3.8.14f. and .11.

the lower soul that enters matter is merely "receptive" of evil rather than already infected by it (I.8.4.12 ff.); that soul's inclination (*neusis*) to descend is not itself a sin (I.1.12.24 ff.); and, again, that soul would not have descended if there had not been darkness already there for it to illuminate (I.1.12.25 ff.).[38]

Let us consider in more detail the reasoning behind Proclus' competing reading of the same passage. In general, Proclus' theory of evil represents the culmination of the tendency in the Neoplatonism after Plotinus to expunge entirely from the exegesis of Plato's treatment of evil any hint of the idea that matter can be the agent of attraction for the soul. Like Plotinus, Proclus regarded all forms of evil,[39] and not just those in the soul, as forms of weakness and impotence. He adopts as a central tenet that evil is not an independent principle, but falls within the ontological domain of the Good. Whatever power it possesses to oppose the Good exists only to the extent that, like all other beings in the world, it derives that power from its projection toward the Good; through this projection evil gains what Proclus calls "vital being," which is to say, its very ability to work against the Good (*DMS* c. 52). There is no single cause of evil and it does not therefore have a standard form of existence (c. 47). Its multiple causes, no matter where evil is located, are themselves composite and without determination.[40] The generation of evil, having no principal cause, no relation to a determinate end, and no share in the natural progression toward being,[41] is a perversion of the natural coming-to-be of things. It follows that all beings and entities in which evil is found are themselves composite and indeterminate. All things that exist as wholes—and these would include most divine beings, whole souls, and whole bodies—have no evil. Evil belongs solely

[38] Indeed, that there is an undescended, higher soul is for Plotinus sufficient proof against the concept, found in Plutarch and Atticus, of a soul evil in itself, for insofar as one part of soul is entirely free from evil, it cannot be the case that soul *per se* is evil (cf. IV.7.10).

See also II.9.3.17 ff. where, in his polemic against the dualism of the Gnostics, Plotinus argues that soul cannot be separated from matter. Of course, qualification is due on the last idea: matter does not pre-exist descent as a co-eternal first principle; cf. II.9.12.

[39] There were several: as we have noted, he distinguished, as did most Platonists, between evils appropriate to the soul and those appropriate to the body; and within the soul there are two sorts of evils as well.

[40] *In Tim.* I 375,6 ff.

[41] Cf. c. 50. This and the following texts are translated and discussed in the Introduction.

to those souls and bodies that are divided and to a certain extent disordered; but even here evil does not touch their essences (*ousiai*) or powers, but only their activities (*energeiai*).[42] Nor must we think that evil has such substantial existence as to be able to reside integrally in any part of soul; rather, Proclus says that it exists in the asymmetry of souls to each other, as similarly in bodies it exists, not in either form or matter, but in the asymmetry of the relationship of form to matter.

The composite soul does conceive a desire (*impetus, appetitus*) for what is worse than itself, but this desire arises entirely out of its inherent weakness. Although with qualification agreeing with Plotinus that certain evils come to the soul from external sources, Proclus rejects his view that soul's evil is exclusively external. There is evil that, while in no way the essence of an evil primal soul like that of Plutarch and Atticus, is nonetheless internal to the soul. While this internal evil reaches even to the level of the rational soul (*DMS* c. 58 [6.8]), it is not pure or absolute nor can it be said to reside in the soul in a literal sense. With these qualifications Proclus can argue that soul is the "cause" of its own evil, but not a true cause (*DMS* cc. 46 and 48 [6.6]).

But this is not to say that matter does not affect the soul in any way. With regard to the two forms of evil that Proclus recognizes in the soul, sickness and shamefulness, the latter form, he says, occurs when the ugliness of matter contaminates composite souls in their concern for it, and in this way evil has its *parhupostasis*.[43] This would seem to be simply another way of saying, as he does say in his interpretation of *Phaedrus*, that soul's original sin is its impotence *ad speculationem*, its turning its vision downward rather than toward itself.[44] This manner of depicting soul's sinfulness, moreover, contains an oblique criticism of Plotinus' theory of evil: matter is not *per se* evil, but is evil only for the soul, and then only when soul turns its attention toward it. But this is not thereby to admit that the soul is *per se* evil. The sinful soul is maleficent not because it contains a maleficent nature, he says at the end of *DMS* c. 46 [6.5], but because it turns downward toward the material world although it "…has the ability through its own power to be drawn toward what is better."[45]

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[42] *In Tim.* I 380,24ff.; cf. *DMS* c. 46 [6.5].

[43] *In Tim.* I 375,6ff.

[44] In *DMS* cc. 33 [6.3] and 46 [6.5]; cf. also c. 39 [6.4] and 48 [6.6].

[45] He thus parries Plotinus' objection that to claim that matter is not evil is to lay the blame on soul. Hager's (1962), 99, suggestion that *DMS* c. 33 [6.3] refers only to soul's "precondition" to evil is irrelevant if evil for Proclus is a weakness, impotence, or

Yet if Plotinus can say that the lower soul is somehow "receptive" of evil, that soul's descent cannot occur without some predisposition to succumb to it that has nothing to do with matter, then perhaps the differences between Plotinus and the Neoplatonists who followed him on the subject of evil are really simply matters of degree rather than of substance. There may, then, be merit in the solution to this problem first proposed by Denis O'Brien some thirty years ago.[46] To quote O'Brien, "It appears…that matter and weakness in the soul are part causes of evil in the soul. They are never singly but only jointly a sufficient cause." He arrives at this conclusion as a means of bringing coherence to a theory of evil that holds, on the one hand, that soul's descent would not be evil were it not for the presence of matter (the point made repeatedly in I.8) and, on the other, that, as O'Brien puts it, "…the presence of matter is not in itself sufficient to account for evil in the soul."[47] So, in O'Brien's thinking soul's weakness will be a sufficient condition of sin, but not a causally sufficient condition. However, the presence of matter *is not* a sufficient *condition* of sin. That is to say, while matter is evil in itself and so provides the occasion for sin even when the soul is not weak enough to fall prey to its attraction, sin will not occur unless and until soul becomes sufficiently weak to succumb. Matter is thus the cause of soul's weakness, although not a sole and sufficient cause and never a sufficient condition for sin.[48]

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absence of Good: this "precondition" to commit sin just is soul's evil. As Plotinus says at I.8.5.14f., great deficiency is the possibility of falling into evil and is itself already evil.

Remarkably similar language turns up in the *Sententiae* of Porphyry. There he says of the partitive hypostases that generate other entities, i.e. composite souls, that their sin originates in their turning toward their creations rather than toward themselves. "Thus matter is evil for these [hypostases] through their ability to turn toward it, while they are also able to turn toward God" (*Sent.* 30, p. 21,3–5 Lamberz; cf. 13, pp. 5–6 on the idea that, of the hypostases that generate, some turn and do not turn, while others turn only to what they generate, rather than to themselves). Now, this being the *Sententiae*, it is perhaps incumbent upon us to take Porphyry as expressing the very Plotinian idea that, while matter is absolute evil and so adversely affects the lower soul that comes into contact with it, the soul that does not descend remains completely unaffected by it. But it is at least possible that he is stating essentially the same idea as Proclus, that matter is evil only relative to the soul that chooses to turn itself away from the truth, in which case we may conclude that we have here additional evidence that Porphyry did eventually forsake his teacher's doctrine of evil, renouncing its two central concepts: that there is an absolute evil and that the responsibility for soul's sinfulness rests in something external to soul.

[46] (1971), 113–146. O'Meara (1999), 155, reaches a very similar conclusion.

[47] *Op. cit.* p. 139.

[48] *Op. cit.* p. 140f. Gerson (1994), 194, agrees with O'Brien in this regard: "[Plotinus']

But Proclus cannot acknowledge any direct role for matter in soul's sinfulness as can Plotinus. This means that the cause of evil in the soul must be either the soul itself or the gods superior to it. Plotinus' argument against Gnostic cosmology emphasizes that if soul is responsible for its descent into matter, then the higher principles upon which Soul is dependent are responsible as well. Proclus, on the other hand, found in both Pythagorean and Platonic cosmologies a very different teaching. Each doctrine makes it a fundamental tenet that the gods are not accountable in any way for the generation of evil; to this end, the adherents of the two systems hold that the Demiurge gave to souls complete autonomy in their actions regarding the universe below them, beginning with their descent, in order that he and the other gods might be blameless for the descent of souls and for the resulting evil.[49] For the Pythagoreans sin is made possible because the gods have inscribed in the essences of souls the laws of Fate; for Platonists, it is occasioned by souls' evil "conditions" (*hexeis*).[50] Yet, Proclus cautions, to say that soul causes evil is no more correct than to say that the cause of evil is corporeal. The existence of evil is such that it does not have a single cause. Soul's sinfulness is, to be sure, connate to it; but it exists in it, as it does in bodies, merely as a *parhupostasis* and pertains at most to soul's symmetry or mixture, by which Proclus evidently means the relationship both of the various parts of soul to each other and of the soul to the body.[51]

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claim [in I.8.14] that the weakness (*astheneia*) of soul 'must be in the souls which have fallen, those which are not pure and have not been purified' is ambiguous as to when the weakness occurs. Plotinus goes on to say in the same passage that matter seduces soul. But of course this could reasonably be said to be successful only if the soul were antecedently so disposed. Finally, he seems to settle on matter as the cause of weakness and vice." Also adopting this view is Blumenthal (2000), 168. Schäfer (2000) argues that Plotinus proffers two sources for evil, one being matter, a negative principle of evil that opposes the Good but is not absolute, and the other the "fallen" soul, through which evil in the material world occurs (5 ff.). According to Schäfer, soul's fall is a spontaneous event that is caused by a disposition that is essential to soul. On Plotinian evil, see also Steel (2001).

[49] *In Tim.* III 301,24 – 303,32; *In Remp.* I 101,5 ff. In both passages Proclus has in mind, for the Platonist argument, *Timaeus* 41e.

[50] Cf. *In Remp.* I 105,16–25 [6.12]. The term is taken from *Statesman* 273bc; cf. *In Tim.* I 375,6–14.

[51] *In Tim.* III 303,1 ff.

Conclusion

In his defense of the concept of the moral autonomy of the soul Proclus is no doubt drawing largely from Iamblichus' critique of Plotinus and others, a critique that relied heavily on an exegesis of *Phaedrus* that was far different from the one espoused by these earlier exegetes. This later Neoplatonic reading de-emphasizes the influence of matter in accounting for the fall and resulting sinfulness of the soul, although not denying that matter exerted some power over the soul in its decline. And in the process the Neoplatonists appropriate the Aristotelian concept of matter in place of the Platonic concept. It should be said, however, that the portrayal of the Plotinian soul by the later Neoplatonists is neither completely fair nor completely accurate insofar as Plotinus himself acknowledged that, while it is true that the soul would not have descended unless matter existed to draw it down, the descent would not have occurred either without the soul's inherent weakness that provided the necessary condition for its decline. There are also indications in early treatises that Plotinus at least entertained the idea that Plato in *Phaedrus* referred to the weakness of soul before its descent as a type of evil that is separate from that which arises after its descent. And no Neoplatonist would go so far as to assert that the soul's sinfulness reaches as far as its essence. Still, to claim, as do Plotinus and Theodorus, that part of the soul does not descend requires affirmation of the idea that there is a part of the soul that is completely without sin. The theory of the undescended soul stipulates that the moral purity of the higher soul is preserved by its permanent distance from matter. Sin is thus an external addition to the lower soul that descends, so that its weakness is not a deficiency in the soul itself, but the addition of that which is deficiency itself. In Proclan psychology, on the other hand, sinfulness does not reside in the irrational soul exclusively, as Plotinus had maintained. For if the rational soul is sinless, then descent cannot be a matter of choice (*prohairesis*), which it necessarily is. For his part Plotinus is motivated by his concern to remove the intelligible world completely from consideration as source of psychic evil. However, by agreeing with Plotinus that the soul before its descent suffers from a weakness that extends as far as its activities, and by regarding this weakness as nothing more than a deficiency or lack, Proclus can counter that sinfulness is internal to the soul and reaches as far as the rational soul without thereby becoming embroiled in a dualism. Thus evil clearly belongs to the higher soul, but is not a positive attribute of its essence.

CONCLUSION

It has been my intent in presenting the foregoing analyses to provide some insight into both the role of the detailed exegeses of Plato's texts of Proclus in his formulation of a characteristically Neoplatonic defense of monism and the ways in which this defense was influenced by the exegeses of Platonists before him. It was fundamental to the methodology of all Platonists that, since the doctrine of evil that they were explicating was ultimately Plato's own, any attempts at working out difficulties with it or meeting the challenges of competing schools must come through direct appeals to what Plato himself wrote. Notwithstanding the enigmatic nature of many of Plato's texts, there was no doubting his affirmation of the existence of evil as well as his firm rejection of any form of dualism. Any attempts to introduce an ontologically separate and autonomous principle of evil into Platonic exegesis—the most notable cases being the doctrines of Plutarch and Atticus—were met with strong denunciation by mainstream Platonists.

According to Proclus, the failure of the dualist doctrines of evil—and of Plotinus' as well—is that their selective reading of Plato has exposed them in self-contradiction. A definitive example is their claim that they had provided an adequate causal account of the generation of evil without thereby implicating God in any way. In doing so, they encounter the problem of explaining how demiurgic Providence can sustain a permanent dominance in the created world over their ontologically independent, co-eternal first principle, the evil World Soul. Proclus also discovers a logical inconsistency inherent in their claim that they have absolved the divine world of responsibility for any role in the creation of evil, since, as he believes, God must be creator of the soul in any of its forms, while at the same time all that he produces must be exclusively good.

If, as the monists claim, Plato recognizes no independent causal principle of evil, yet accords to evil a certain mode of existence, then it would seem to be the case either (1) that the Good is its ultimate cause or (2) evil has no true first principle at all. For Proclus, that evil does exist means that, as with all forms of existence, it ultimately derives

from the Good. But at the same time it possesses no single *immediate* cause. Part of Proclus' project, then, is to show how claims (1) and (2) can be compatible. This attempt culminates in the conclusion that the Good is the ultimate cause of evil, as it is of all entities; yet evil is like no other existing thing in that it has no single immediate cause and so no natural *telos*. And this defines its mode of privation of the Good. So in his exegesis of Plato Proclus is at all times guided by his underlying axiom that, since evil necessarily exists, it must exist at the same time as opposition to the Good and as part of the ontological structure that derives from the Good. Its 'power' to oppose the Good is thus limited and realized solely through the privation through which it affects both bodies and souls. Its mode of privation therefore requires that evil not be absolute. Here Proclus parts company with Plotinus, whose theory that matter is primary evil leads him to an ill-conceived concept of evil's privation. To some extent the problems with Plotinus' theory can be tied to his misreading of Plato, particularly *Theaetetus* 176a and various passages in *Sophist*. In Proclus' reading of these and other texts, Plato is indeed claiming that the existence of evil is determined by its opposition to the Good, yet it is 'empowered' in this opposition by the Good itself. Such opposition, then, cannot be thorough. To employ the terminology of Neoplatonic metaphysics, evil's privation of the Good, on the one hand, insofar as it constitutes something more than just the absence or lack of being, should be regarded as opposition to the Good, while on the other, it is nothing more than a privation. Evil is, in Plato's words, the sub-contrary to the Good.

In the context of the corporeal world, Plato locates evil's privation in a pre-cosmic disorder, and it is here that we begin to see where monistic Platonists are confronted with their own problems of interpretation. As Proclus sees it, the source of this disorder is in the lack of articulation of the trace-forms, which generate a pre-cosmic motion to which matter contributes through its own privation, but of which, due to its complete formlessness, it cannot itself be the true cause. He thereby rejects earlier theories that variously laid the responsibility for the generation of evil on the soul, on matter in itself, or on bodies in nature. Advocates of the first two theories had formulated different types of dualism; supporters of the third had been compelled to admit that God is responsible for evil. In dismissing the first theory, Proclus and others of like mind, in response to Aristotle, must find the source of the pre-cosmic motion in something other than soul or the Demiurge, and their theory must fit with Plato's non-temporal account of creation.

One might also expect them to meet Porphyry's objection that what is not truly a physical body cannot be in motion at all. In one sense they could—and did—point to the fact that, in Plato's myth of creation, the disorderliness of the motion must constitute merely the lack of divine activity, either of intellect or of soul, in the pre-existence of the universe. But they would then be hard pressed to harmonize this view with Plato's statement that evil is the sub-contrary to the Good, that is, it is not *just* the absence of being. There was also recourse to Plato's account in *Timaeus* of the reciprocal disturbances produced by the mixture of inchoate forms with matter, whereby matter gained a sort of power of its own. In this account, the trace-forms produce the initial disturbance in matter and are thus the causes of matter's 'ability' to agitate the trace-forms in return. But, strictly speaking, even this explanation would mean altering fundamentally the 'nature' of matter as completely passive and deficient. Proclus himself does not resort to the reciprocity doctrine to explain corporeal evil; rather, he points exclusively to the lack of articulation of the trace-forms. This presents an apparent problem for Proclus in his insistence that the divine world be removed from any direct or indirect participation in the disorderliness. For in the hierarchy of his metaphysics only the Paradigm can produce inarticulate forms, although it is only at the level of the pre-cosmic proto-bodies that this lack of articulation is a true privation and so capable of producing a disorderly motion in matter. Corporeal evil, then, is merely the incidental by-product of divine creation that is occasioned entirely by the coalescence of the inchoate forms with matter. Proclus thus felt that he had reconciled the seemingly conflicting doctrinal requirements (1) that the account of the cause of what "subsequently" becomes evil must point to an ontological level above that occupied by the Demiurge and (2) that such an account must remain free of any of the elements of the dualistic doctrines of Plutarch, Atticus, Numenius, and their followers by nonetheless placing pre-cosmic 'generation' under the supervision of demiurgic Providence. The evilness of the pre-cosmic disorder does not come from above, but is, at least in the context of Plato's dialogues, a function of the privation of order in the motion of the proto-bodies. The pre-cosmic disorder thus falls under the control of divine Providence, as the first of two stages in the process of cosmic creation that results in an imperfect world in which good is the dominant power but evil survives, at least in vestigial form.

But the later Neoplatonists were not always successful in their attempts to forge an unqualified monism. In the case of Proclus we

find an inconsistency between his emphasis on the claim that the evil of the disorderly motion consists merely in its lack of order (so that it is privation in the sense of mere negation) and his principle that evil is privation in the Aristotelian sense of contrary or opposite. As Lloyd notes, Proclus distinguished between two species of privation: " …(i) total privation which has no degrees and is equivalent to mere absence of the form in question, and (ii) privation which co-exists with the form of which it is a privation (*De mal. sub*. 52)."[1] While in the same treatise both denying that evil is privation in sense (i) and affirming that it is privation in sense (ii), Proclus in certain contexts of his earlier commentaries on Plato in effect maintains just the opposite. Perhaps the inconsistency is to be explained as the result of the fact that the attempts to merge the purely theoretical aspects of his doctrine of evil with the Platonist tradition of exegesis of Plato did not always result in a perfect fit. Of course those who would offer such an explanation must assume that these theoretical elements are not the outgrowth of this exegetical tradition, but are formulated in parallel to it. The more formal theory may have developed independently of the tradition of interpretation of the dialogues, such that subsequent fusing was not without its difficulties.

As did Platonists before him, Proclus appropriates the concept of an irrational nature to provide a further buffer between the creative activity of the Demiurge and the generation of evil. For he could thus solve the dilemma posed by the dualists as to how anything but soul could provide the external motive cause for other entities by ascribing self-motion to the proto-body without thereby ascribing to it a soul as well. The proto-body thus becomes a self-moving entity that nonetheless does not possess life; moreover, insofar as it is inseparable, this nature does not survive the death of the body, so that there is no form of evil. Again, although the creative energy of the Demiurge does not figure into the pre-cosmic activity of this irrational nature, to the extent that nature pre-exists in the Paradigm and is thereby, like soul, one of the demiurgic causes, it falls under divine Providence and, in contrast to the chaos that it helps to produce in the proto-body, exerts alimentary powers upon the world, to the point of providing the link between the mortal and divine realms. This bifurcation of functions in *phusis* constitutes for most Platonists another expression of the idea that

[1] (1987), 152.

evil exists in the world necessarily, but is not a principle independent of the Good. Thus when Proclus says that nature is "without god," he means something quite different from Plutarch's unqualified statement that the evil World Soul, as the motive cause of the pre-cosmic disorder, has no share in the intelligible world. Among other things, such a view calls into question the extent of the influence of divine Providence over the world. How are we to distinguish the spheres and powers of Providence and Fate? To make Fate a principle independent of Providence and semi-autonomous, as did Numenius, or to remove the primal motive cause completely from divine governance, as did Plutarch, were grave challenges to Proclus and other monists. Platonists disagreed concerning the precise status of nature, the most notable example being Proclus' rejection of Plotinus' idea that nature is an inseparable and immortal phase of soul. Proclus' transparent motive in so doing is to disavow any connection between the soul and the generation of the pre-cosmic evil in which, traditionally, nature played a part. Yet all agree on the salutary part played by nature in the creation and sustenance of the world, in affirmation of the obedience of all pre-cosmic chaos to the power of demiurgic Providence.

There are difficulties as well with various aspects of Proclus' concept of nature. The pre-cosmic, irrational motion may be regarded as a defect or lack, but it is nonetheless a motion and as such it must have a cause, whether internal or external. At times Proclus attributes the source of this motion to the inchoate traces of the forms and at others to the irrational *phusis*. Under normal circumstances, if the motion is to be considered an event insofar as it has a cause, then it seems that it should be included among all other events that have their proper cause and so their proper *telos*. But this is precisely the mode of existence that Proclus refuses to assign to evil. In fact, Proclus is careful to make clear that evil does not have an *arkhê* that itself has a determinative cause, since in that case evil would necessarily have such a cause as well.[2] We must keep in mind, however, that this 'event,' if that is indeed what Proclus thought it to be, happens before the creation of the cosmos, that is, before the imposition of the directing power of demiurgic Providence. Yet in his account of the irrational nature there is no hint of his claim made elsewhere that there are multiple causes of evil; here nature is *the* cause. In this context it would do Proclus no

[2] *In Tim.* I 380,31 ff.

good to distinguish the irrationality of the motion from the motion itself and its cause or causes, as it did for Plotinus. Moreover, we might well find Proclus' various explanations of nature's relationship to the divine world to be patently self-contradictory. As irrational, *phusis* begins a motion that is deprived of life, and so of soul and immortality. Yet at the same time it is said to be "inspired" and guided by the divine realm, and even to possess divine properties.[3] As we noted above, such a bifurcation of nature may fit well with Proclus' monism: the abrupt transition of evil from pre-cosmic disorder to a cooperative element within the cosmic order is more easily explained if it is accepted that its cause has always been connected to God. But such convenience comes at the price of doctrinal inconsistency.

The differing analyses of the relationship between the irrational nature and the higher soul of the All provides a better understanding as well of other exegetical problems encountered by all Platonists in addressing Plato's texts. Both Atticus and Plotinus maintain an unbroken series of causal actions extending from the self-exertion of the World Soul to the disturbance in matter caused by nature. Plotinus thus found it perfectly legitimate to say that nature is a soul, albeit one of its lowest manifestations. At the same time, he shields himself from criticism by distinguishing between the cause of the motion itself (nature) and the cause of that motion's disorder/evil (matter). This concept of the continuity between the highest and lowest phases of the soul is abandoned by the later Neoplatonists as they strive to preserve the transcendence of the divine world and thus its absolution from the responsibility for evil. Proclus, no doubt following his Neoplatonic predecessors, held that the activities of the higher soul must be exempt from any involvement with those of the irrational nature since the former are part of the creative work of the Demiurge, and this work is exclusively related to bringing order—*inter alia* in the form of life—to the disorder associated with *phusis*.

Followers of the monism of Plotinus could thus avoid the problem of explaining the connection between the divine realm and nature by claiming that nature or the trace-forms provide only a neutral motion; the disorderliness is due to matter itself. The 'ability' of matter to influence the pre-cosmic proto-body in this manner would then be partly explained by the fact that the forms with which it combines

[3] *In Tim.* I 8,5–9 (4.4).

are only traces or not fully articulated and thus lack the power fully to bring matter under their rational control. The later Neoplatonists as well, who do not have recourse to matter to account for the disorder, are left to explain the disorder of the motion by pointing to the lack of full articulation in the trace-forms. But then in both cases, if evil at this point is nothing more than a lack of order, one might well argue that the deficiency inherent in the traces of the forms, just as the deficiency that is inherent in matter, must be seen as at least partly productive of that evil. The recourse for Proclus is to maintain that what is deficiency in the proto-creation is not so in the Paradigm in which it is pre-figured. There is an interesting inversion of ontological value in play here: the very lack of articulation of the forms that in the Paradigm marks its superiority to the Demiurge, in whom they become fully articulated, contributes in the proto-creation to its inferiority to the generated universe, where the fully articulated forms 'subsequently' bring order to disorder.

The question of the extent to which evil pertains to the soul is construed as question of whether or not evil belongs to soul's essence. Proclus affirms the Platonic concept that no soul can be absolutely—that is, essentially—evil. Once again, then, the doctrines of Plutarch and Atticus, as well as of Numenius, are fundamentally wrong. Plato in *Laws* does not present an evil soul at the cosmic level, nor is there any indication of such a soul in *Timaeus* or *Statesman*. To have done so, far from removing God from blame for the generation of evil, would have even more clearly implicated him, since God must be the creator of all souls. Yet, contrary to Plotinus, Proclus does locate the source of sinfulness entirely in the human soul itself rather than attributing it to matter alone or to a combination of soul's inherent weakness and the privation of matter. If matter is, as most Platonists agreed that it was, lacking altogether in qualities and entirely passive, it should exert no power over the soul at all. More importantly for Proclus, however, to claim that matter seduces the soul in its descent is to challenge the concept of soul's autonomy at its core. But this argument leaves Proclus caught up in the same dilemma that Plotinus finds in the Gnostic doctrine of evil: if psychic evil is inherent to soul and exists in it before its descent, then such evil can ultimately be traced back to the divine world of the intelligibles. Proclus, however, appropriating a different tradition of exegesis of Pythagoreanism and Platonism, maintained that, in order to remove the gods from accountability for the origination of psychic evil, Pythagoras and Plato attributed to the Demiurge the act

of bestowing upon the soul unimpeded freedom of action in its descent into and relationship with the lower world. His specific response to the Plotinian criticism is to distinguish among the different modes in which evil can reside in the soul, whether in its essence, powers and activities, or more narrowly in its powers and activities, or in its activities alone. The evil in the soul affects only its activities, he says, so that it belongs only to "divided" souls, and even in this case it does not reside in any part of the divided soul—indeed, it does not in any precise sense reside in the soul at all. Its existence in the soul appears to be solely relational, manifesting itself in the interactions of the soul's activities with those of other entities, including other souls as well as bodies, rather than to be one of presence. Proclus can thus reject the view of Plotinus and others that soul's evil is externally derived, while at the same time affirming that it is not part of soul's nature. In one sense it is true that the source of soul's evil is soul itself, but soul is not thereby the singular cause of that evil, at least in the true sense of that word. Matter does play a role in all of this, but only to the extent that the soul chooses to turn toward it and is affected by its "ugliness;" matter is not *per se* evil.

We must, therefore, reconsider the view of some commentators[4] that Proclus, casting a wary eye at the confusion to which Plotinus fell victim in his theory, offered an appreciably more cogent and logically consistent doctrine of evil. For our analysis of his exegesis of Plato has shown this to be a much too uncritical evaluation. We have found that, while Proclus identifies an intelligible source of evil in order to satisfy the need for a unbroken causal chain extending from the One to matter, he also assigns a thoroughly irrational, sub-psychic power as evil's more immediate cause as a way of removing the divine world from responsibility for its generation. His postulation of the mode of evil's existence, that in some sense it is intermediate between those things whose existence is partly defined by their absence of the Good and those things that are in absolute opposition to the Good, leaves unclear exactly where on the *scala* of being we are to place evil. And his explanation of the role of the Paradigm and evil's relationship to it—and to the divine world in general—in the generation of the cosmos does not sufficiently divorce the divine world from participation in the generation of evil. It is thus not categorically true that in the Proclan doctrine evil has

[4] See, for example, Blumenthal (2000), 168.

no metaphysical cause, as most scholars have suggested and as Proclus himself frequently insisted. At most we can accept this claim only qualifiedly. Certainly Proclus has provided justification for the assertion that evil *qua* evil has no such cause. Yet we must admit that, in order to emphasize that evil as a phenomenon of the world must, like all other phenomena, be dependent for its existence on the divine world, he cannot avoid positing a metaphysical foundation for its coming-to-be as a pre-cosmic chaotic motion, that is, the noeric Paradigm. In the end, then, full accountability for the generation of evil must to some degree extend to the divine world. Proclus would doubtless inveigh that to say that the Paradigm is the cause of evil is impious; in the formulation of his doctrine, however, he cannot explain away the need to impute at least an indirect role to the Paradigm in this aspect of creation. The great Neoplatonist project in formulating their doctrines of evil, to affirm the existence of evil while also placing it squarely within God's providential control of the cosmos, and achieving both of these aims while still removing God from any and all responsibility for evil's existence, does take a radically different course after Plotinus, but nonetheless is betrayed by essentially the same difficulties throughout. To be sure, Proclus refines some of the rougher edges on Plotinus' doctrine, yet is for all that none the more successful finally in reconciling these two perhaps irreconcilable concepts. In attempting what must be called a more radically monistic interpretation of Plato, then, the later Neoplatonists did permanently change the direction of Platonist exegesis. Freed from the dilemma of having to make an absolute principle of evil logically consistent with the complete supremacy of the Good, they were confident that they could find in Plato a doctrine that harmoniously embraced those texts to which the dualists appealed in support of their theories along with those that had become the standard points of reference for the monists. This should in part explain the popularity of Proclus' doctrine in the later schools, where the problem of evil was no less urgent.

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